

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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HALF A MILLION OF MONEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BARBARA'S HISTORY."

CHAPTER XXXI. ABOUT SWITZERLAND.

YOUR English match-maker is, for the most part, a comfortable matron, plump, good natured, kindly, with a turn for sentiment and diplomacy. She has, "The Etiquette of Courtship and Marriage" at her fingers' ends; and gives copies of that invaluable little manual to her young friends, as soon as they are engaged. When the sermon is dull, she amuses herself by reading the Solemnization of Matrimony. She delights in novels that have a great deal of love in them, and thinks Miss Bremen a finer writer than Mr. Thackeray. To patch up lovers' quarrels, to pave the way for a proposal, to propitiate reluctant guardians, are offices in which her very soul rejoices; and, like the death-bed hag in the Bride of Lammermoor who surveyed all her fellow-creatures from a professional point of view, seeing "a bonny corpse" in every fine young man about that country-side, she beholds only bridegrooms and brides elect in the very children of her friends, when they come home for the holidays.

Lady Arabella Walkingshaw was an enthusiastic match-maker. She had married off her own daughters with brilliant success, and, being a real lover of the art of matrimony, delighted "to keep her hand in" among the young people of her acquaintance. What whist was to Mrs. Battle, match-making was to Lady Arabella Walkingshaw. "It was her business, her duty, what she came into the world to do." She went about it scientifically. She had abstruse theories with respect to eyes, complexions, ages, and christian names; and even plunged into unknown physiological depths on the subject of races, genealogies, ties of consanguinity, and hereditary characteristics. In short, she constructed her model matches after a private ideal of her own. But hers was not altogether a sentimental, nor even a physiological, ideal. She was essentially a woman of the world; and took an interest quite as deep, if not deeper, in the pairing of fortunes as of faces. To introduce an income of ten thousand a year to a dowry of fifty thousand pounds, and unite the two sums in the bonds (and settlements) of wedlock, was to Lady Arabella an enterprise of surpassing in-

terest. She would play for such a result as eagerly and passionately as if her own happiness depended on the cards, and the stakes were for her own winning.

With such a hobby kept perpetually saddled in the chambers of her imagination, it was not surprising that the sight of Saxon Trefalden leading Miss Hatherton down to dance, should have sufficed to send Lady Arabella off at a canter.

"What a charming match that would be!" said she to Mrs. Bunyon. Mrs. Bunyon was the wife of the handsome Bishop, tall, aristocratic-looking, and many years his junior. Both ladies were standing near their hostess, and she was still welcoming the coming guest.

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Bunyon, doubtfully. "I don't see why."

"My dear Mrs. Bunyon—two such splendid fortunes!"

"The less reason that either should marry for money," replied the Bishop's wife. "Besides, look at the difference of age!"

"Not more than five years," said Lady Arabella.

"But it would be five years on the wrong side. What do you say, Lady Castletowers—would they make a desirable couple?"

"I did not hear the names," replied Lady Castletowers, with one of her most gracious smiles.

"We were speaking," said the match-maker, "of Miss Hatherton and Mr. Trefalden."

The smile vanished from Lady Castletowers' lip.

"I should think it a most injudicious connexion," she said, coldly. "Mr. Trefalden is a mere boy, and has no prestige beyond that of wealth."

"But fortune *is* position," said Lady Arabella, defending her ground inch by inch, and thinking, perhaps, of her own marriage.

"Miss Hatherton has fortune, and may therefore aspire to more than fortune in her matrimonial choice," replied the Countess, with a slightly heightened colour, and dropped the conversation.

Mrs. Bunyon and Lady Arabella exchanged glances, and a covert smile. Moving on presently with the stream, they passed out of Lady Castletowers' hearing, and returned to the subject.

"Their united fortunes," pursued Lady

Arabella, "would amount to five millions, if not more. Only conceive it—FIVE MILLIONS!" "You will meet with no sympathy from Lady Castletowers," said the Bishop's wife, significantly.

"Evidently not. Though, if there were really a coronet in prospect . . . ?"

"I think there is a coronet in prospect," said Mrs. Bunyon.

Lady Arabella shook her head.

"No more than there is a crown matrimonial," said she. "I am a close observer of young people, and I know quite well what direction the Earl's inclinations take."

"Indeed?"

"He is over head and ears in love with Mademoiselle Colonna," said Lady Arabella, confidentially. "And has been, for years."

"Does Lady Castletowers know it?"

"I think not."

"And do you suppose they are secretly engaged?"

"Oh dear no! Mademoiselle Colonna, I believe, discourages his attentions—greatly to her credit."

"It is a marriage that would be highly distasteful to Lady Castletowers," observed Mrs. Bunyon.

"It would break her heart," said Lady Arabella.

"She is ambitious."

"—and poor. Poor as a mouse."

If Lady Castletowers had not been a Countess, a Holme-Pierrepont, and the daughter of an Earl, Lady Arabella Walkingshaw could scarcely have forgiven her this fact. She was one of that large majority who regard poverty as a crime.

In the mean while, Miss Hatherton had found that Saxon could not only dance, but, when the first shyness of introduction had worn off, could actually talk. So she set herself to draw him out, and his naïveté amused her excessively.

"I don't mean to let you hand me to a seat, and get rid of me, Mr. Trefalden," she said, when the quadrille was over, and the dancers were promenading up and down the hall. "You must sit down in this quiet little nook, and talk to me. I want you to tell me ever so much more about Switzerland."

"I am glad to find any one who cares to hear about it," said Saxon. "It is a subject of which I am never weary."

"I dare say not. I only wonder how you can endure this life of tinsel and glitter after the liberty of the mountains. Are you not disgusted with the insincere smiles, and polite falsehoods of society?"

Saxon looked at her with dismay.

"What do you mean?" he said. "The world has been very kind to me. I never dreamt that its smiles were false, or its kindness insincere."

Miss Hatherton laughed.

"You'll find it out," she said, "when you've lived in it a little longer."

"I hope not. I should be very unhappy if I thought so."

"Well, then, don't think so. Enjoy your

illusions as long as you can. I have outlived mine long ago; and I'm sorry for it. But let us talk of something pleasanter—of Switzerland. Have you ever hunted the chamois?"

"Hundreds of times."

"How charming! High up, I suppose, among the snows?"

"Among the snows, along the edges of precipices, across the glaciers—wherever the chamois could spring, or the foot of the hunter follow," replied Saxon, with enthusiasm.

"That's really dangerous sport, is it not?" asked the heiress.

"It is less dangerous to the practised mountaineer than to one who is new to the work. But there can be no real sport without danger."

"Why so?"

"Because sport without danger is mere slaughter. The risks ought never to be all on the side of a helpless beast."

"That is just and generous," said Miss Hatherton, warmly.

Saxon blushed, and looked uncomfortable.

"I have not only been over a glacier, but down a crevasse, after a chamois, many a time," said he, hurriedly. "I shot one this very spring, as he stood upon an ice-ridge, between two chasms. I ought not to have done it. I ought to have waited till he got to a more open spot; but, having him well within range, I brought him down. When I reached the spot, however, there was my chamois wedged half way down a deep, blue, cruel-looking crevasse—and I had no alternative but to get him out, or leave him."

"So you cut steps in the ice, as one sees in the pictures in the Alpine-club books!"

"No—I simply tied the cord that every mountaineer carries, round the stock of my rifle—fixed the gun firmly across the mouth of the chasm—and let myself down. Then I tied another cord round my chamois, and when I had reached the top again, I drew him up after me. Nothing is easier. A child can do it, if he is used to the ice, and is not afraid. In all glacier work, it is only the rash and the timid who are in danger."

"And what other sport do you get?" asked Miss Hatherton. "Are there any eagles about the mountains of the Grisons?"

"Not so many as there used to be. I have not shot more than five or six within these last three years; but I robbed many an eagle's nest when I was a boy. Then, you know, we have the steinbok, and in winter, the wolf; and sometimes we get the chance of a brown bear."

"Have you ever shot a bear, Mr. Trefalden?" said Miss Hatherton, intensely interested.

"I have shot two," replied Saxon, with a flush of boyish pride, "and made sledge-rugs of their skins. You have never been in Switzerland?"

"Oh yes I have," replied Miss Hatherton; "but only in the beaten tracks, and under the custody of a courier, like a maniac with a keeper."

"Ah, you really know nothing of the country," said Saxon, "nor of the people. The Switzerland

that the Swiss loves, is that wild, free, upper region where there are neither roads nor hotels, tourists nor guides; but only dark pine forests and open plateaus, the haunt of the marmot, the ptarmigan, and the chamois."

"I never saw but one chamois," said Miss Hatherton, "and that was a poor fat melancholy creature in a cage."

"Of course you never visited Switzerland in winter?"

"Oh dear no."

"And yet that is the most glorious time of all, when the plateaus are all sheeted with snow, and the great peaks rise above them like marble obelisks, and even the pines stand out white against the deep blue sky. It is like a world awaiting the creation of colour."

"What an enthusiast you are," laughed Miss Hatherton.

"I love my country," replied Saxon.

"You need not tell me that. But what can you do in winter, snowed up in those wild valleys?"

"We are not snowed up. We have sledges; and the deeper the snow lies on the roads and passes, the better our sledges fly along. You should see the Rheinthal between Chur and Thusis, on a bright day in the depth of winter, when the sledges flash along in the sunshine, and the air is full of the music of the bells."

"How delightful!"

"Indeed it is delightful. Then we also skate, practise with the rifle, carve wooden toys, and attend to the winter work of our farms; and sometimes, if there is a wolf or a wild boar about the neighbourhood, we have a great hunt by torchlight. Winter is the time for Switzerland! Ask any Swiss who is not a townsman, and he will tell you the same story."

"I suppose you mean to go back there some day?" said Miss Hatherton.

"Go back!" echoed Saxon. "Why, of course I do. It is my own country—my home!"

"Then if I were to come some Christmas to Chur, would you be very kind to me, and show me some of these winter sports?"

"That I would!" exclaimed Saxon. "And I would buy the loveliest Canadian sledge for you that money could purchase; and you should see a boar hunt by torchlight; and a Schützen Fest; and a wrestling-match; and I would find you a young marmot for a pet. Above all, you would know my dearest father, and if you loved Switzerland for no other reason, you would love it for his sake."

"Your father?" said Miss Hatherton. "I had no idea your father was living."

"He is really my uncle," replied the young man; "but my father by adoption. He is a Lutheran pastor—a miracle of erudition; but as simple as a child, and as pious as an apostle."

"I hear you are terribly learned yourself, Mr. Trefalden," said Miss Hatherton, rising abruptly. "But what is this they are going to do—a waltz? Do you waltz?"

"Try me," replied Saxon, merrily. "It is

our national dance—the only dance I ever knew, till I learned these hideous quadrilles a few weeks ago."

In another moment he had encircled the heiress's waist with his arm, and was flying round the hall with her in those smooth, swift circles which no dancers, however good, can execute like the Germans and Swiss. Miss Hatherton was delighted; for she valued a good partner above all things, and Saxon was the best waltzer in the room.

She would willingly have danced and talked with him all the rest of the evening; for Miss Hatherton liked to be amused, and cared very little for the remarks of lookers-on; while Saxon, pleased with her blunt cordiality, would with equal readiness have gone on waltzing, and praising a Swiss life, till it was time to hand her to her carriage. But this was not to be. Lady Castletowers, who, in her quality of hostess, always knew what her guests were doing, was by no means disposed to permit any such proceeding; so she despatched her son to dance with the heiress, and, having sent for Saxon, herself handed him over to Miss Colonna for the next quadrille.

By this time the arrivals were over, and the departures had begun; and after supper was served, the rooms cleared rapidly. By two o'clock, all were gone, save those guests who remained for the night, and of these there were about a dozen.

Then Viscount and Lady Esher, who had brought valet and maid in their suite, retired to the stately apartments prepared for their reception; and the young men all went down to the Earl's smoking-room; and the Colonnes, instead of going to bed like the rest of the guests, repaired to the little study in the turret. They had much to talk over. Mr. Thompson, the liberal member, had brought them information of Garibaldi, and a packet of letters from friends in London and Turin; Miss Hatherton and Mr. Walkingshaw had promised contributions to the fund; and Mrs. Bunyon had undertaken to distribute some addresses, and fill up a card, among her friends. With the Eshers and Lord Boxhill there was, of course, nothing to be done. Like Lady Castletowers, they looked upon liberty as a vulgar institution, and upon patriots in general as doubtful characters.

The letters read, and such entries made as were necessary, the father and daughter rose to say good night.

"You have done nothing yet, Olimpia," said the Italian. "Here is the fourth day already gone."

"I know it."

"I have talked with him once or twice about our country's cause, and he listens willingly; but I have purposely abstained from doing more. The work is yours—why do you delay it?"

"I will not delay it longer," replied Olimpia, impatiently; "I will begin it to-day."

"He is so rich," said Colonna, "and Italy so poor; and every letter we receive is a prayer for help!"

"You need not urge me. Have I not said to-day?—and see, the grey is already in the sky!"

She bade him good night abruptly, and went along the silent corridors to her own room, far away. But the grey had paled to white, and the white had turned to sunlight, before she took the flowers from her hair, or the bracelets from her arms, or even seemed to remember that it would be well to seek an hour or two of sleep. What wonder, then, that when at last she threw herself, half dressed, upon the bed, her eyes looked worn and hollow, and her cheek scarcely less white than the pillow against which it was laid?

CHAPTER XXXII. HOW SAXON IMPROVED THE WEATHERCOCK AT CASTLETOWERS.

"WHAT the deuce can we do to amuse all these people?" said Lord Castletowers to Major Vaughan, as they met on the stairs before breakfast, the morning after the party. "The Eshers, I know, go early, and my mother will take care of the ladies; but here are six or eight men in the house, none of whom are likely to leave before night. What is to be done?"

"Billiards?"

"Well enough for an hour or two; but après?"

"We might ride over to Guildford, and beat up the quarters of those Forty-second men who were here last night."

"Impossible. There are only five riding horses in the stables, including yours and Trefalden's; and I haven't even guns enough to take them out shooting, if there were anything to shoot, except rooks—which there isn't!" said the Earl, in desperation.

"Then I don't know what we can do, unless we put on the gloves; but here comes the Arcadian—perhaps he can suggest something."

The Arcadian meant Saxon. This nickname had befallen him of late, no one knew how. The difficulty was no sooner explained to him, than he proposed a way out of it.

"Let us organise a Volks-fest in the Swiss fashion," said he. "We can shoot at a mark, leap, and run foot races; and invite the ladies to award the prizes."

"A famous idea!" exclaimed the Earl. "The very thing for a bright, cool day, like this."

"We must choose a space of level sward to begin with," said the major, "and improvise a grand stand for the ladies."

"And elect an umpire," said Saxon.

"And look up some prizes," added the Earl. "I will give that bronze cup in the library—it is an antique from Pompeii."

"And I, my inlaid pistols," said Saxon.

"And I . . . bah, I am such a poor devil," said Vaughan. "I possess nothing of any value—except my sword and my horse."

"The best riches of a soldier, Major Vaughan," said Mademoiselle Colonna. "May I ask why this parliament is being held upon the stairs?"

She had just come, unheard, along the carpeted corridor, and stood waiting, a few steps higher than the trio in consultation. She wore

a delicate grey dress of some soft material, trimmed with black velvet, and a little linen collar fastened at the throat by a circular brooch of Roman gold. Behind her, fell the folds of a crimson curtain; whilst, through the uppermost roses of a huge Gothic window that reached from nearly the top to the bottom of the great oak staircase, a stream of vivid sunshine poured down upon her head, so that she stood in the midst of it, in her pale, proud beauty, as if enclosed in a pillar of light.

The three men looked up, dazzled, almost breathless, as if in presence of some glorified apparition; and for a moment none replied.

Mademoiselle Colonna, divining, perhaps, with her fine womanly instinct, the spell by which they were bound, moved a step lower, out of the sunshine, and said:

"All silent? Nay, then, I fear it is not a parliament, but a plot."

"It is a plot, signora," replied Vaughan. "We are planning some out-of-door sports for this afternoon's entertainment. Will you be our Queen of Beauty, and graciously condescend to distribute the prizes."

The Earl coloured, and bit his lip.

"Vaughan's promptitude," said he, "bears hardly upon those whose wit, or audacity, is less ready at command. I had myself intended to solicit this grace at Miss Colonna's hands."

"The race, my dear fellow, is to the swift, and the battle to the strong, in the affairs of life," replied Vaughan, carelessly. "But what says our sovereign lady?"

"That she dares not pledge her royal word too hastily. Mine, you know, is not an honorary secretaryship; and I know not what work this morning's post may bring for my pen. Besides, I must hear what arrangements Lady Castletowers may have in contemplation."

"I don't think my mother will make any that shall deprive us of the light of her countenance on such an important occasion," said the Earl. "But there goes the gong. We must adjourn this debate till after breakfast."

Lady Castletowers was pleased to approve her son's scheme, and promised not only to honour the course with her presence at half-past two o'clock, but to bring with her two young ladies who had slept at the house, and were to have been driven home early in the morning. These were the daughters of a poor clergyman who lived about twelve miles off, and, being very young and timid, looked up to the stately Countess as though she were the queen of heaven. Miss Colonna, being urged thereto by Lady Castletowers herself, was induced to accept the royal office; and, although Viscount and Lady Esher were, of course, too magnificent to alter their plans, and drove away behind their four horses shortly after breakfast, the patronage of the little fête promised to be quite brilliant enough to stimulate the ambition of the candidates.

It was a happy thought, and gave ample occupation to everybody concerned. There were six young men that day at Castletowers besides Sir Charles Burgoyne, Major Vaughan, and Saxon

Trefalden. These six were the Hon. Pelham Hay, of Balliol College, Oxford; the Hon. Edward Brandon; Lieutenant Frank Torrington, of the Fourth Lancers; Mr. Guy Greville, of the Perquisite Office; and two brothers named Sydney and Robert Pulteney, belonging, as yet, to no place or profession whatever. There was not "the making" of one really prominent man among the whole half-dozen. There was not, perhaps, one more than commonly clever man; but they were, for all that, a by no means indifferent specimen lot of the stuff of which English gentlemen are made. They were all of patrician blood—all honourable, good-natured, good-looking, manly young fellows, who had been brought up to ride, speak the truth, and respect the game-laws. They dressed perfectly, and tied their cravats to admiration. They spoke that conventional dialect which passes for good English in good society, and expressed themselves with that epigrammatic neatness that almost sounds like wit, and comes naturally to men who have been educated at a great university and finished in a crack regiment, a government office, or a Pall-Mall club. And they were all dancing men, and nearly all members of the Erechtheum. Of the whole set, the Hon. Edward Brandon was the most indifferent specimen of the genus homo; yet even he, though short enough of brain, did not want for breeding, and, however poorly off for muscle, was not without pluck.

The whole breakfast-party hailed the scheme with enthusiasm, and even Signor Colonna said he would go down to see the running. Prizes were freely subscribed over the breakfast-table. Lady Castletowers promised a curious yataghan that had belonged to Lord Byron, and been given to her late husband by a member of the poet's family; Signor Colonna offered an Elzevir Horace, with the autograph of Filicaja on the title-page; and the competitors united in making up a purse of twenty guineas, to be run for in a one-mile race, and handed over by the winner to Miss Colonna for the Italian fund. As for the young men, they despatched their breakfasts with the rapidity of schoolboys on a holiday morning, and were soon hard at work upon the necessary preparations.

To choose and measure a smooth amphitheatre of sward about half a mile from the house, set up a winning-post for the racers, a target for the marksmen, and a temporary grand stand for the spectators, was work enough for more than the four hours and a half that lay between ten and half-past two; but these amateur workmen, assisted by the village carpenter and his men, as well as by all the grooms, gardeners, and odd helps that could be got together, worked with so good a will that the ground was ready a full hour and three-quarters before the time. The grand stand alone was a triumph of ingenuity. It consisted of a substratum of kitchen tables securely lashed together, a carpet and some chairs; the whole structure surmounted by a canopy formed of a rick-cloth suspended to a tree and a couple of tall stakes.

Having gone once over the course at a "sling-

trot," just to try the ground, the young men returned to the house at one o'clock, furiously hungry, and in tremendous spirits.

Castletowers had ordered luncheon to be prepared in the smoking-room, and there, laughing, talking, eating, and drinking all at once, they made out the programme of the games.

"What shall we begin with?" said the Earl, pencil in hand. "We must end, of course, with the one-mile race, and I think we ought to take the rifle work first, before running has made our hands less steady."

"Of course. Rifles first, by all means," replied three or four voices together.

"Names, then, if you please. Now, gentlemen, who goes in for the bronze cup at eight hundred yards?"

"On what conditions?" asked one of the lunchers.

"The usual conditions. Five shots each, at eight hundred yards; ordinary Enfield rifle; Wimbledon scoring; that is to say, outer, two; centre, three; bull's-eye, four."

"Eight hundred's rather long practice for outsiders," said another man, immersed at the moment in chicken-pie.

"If we had small bores, I should put it down at a thousand," replied the Earl; "but there's only one in the house."

The man in the pie was heard to mutter something unintelligible about the abundance of great bores; but being instantly choked by his nearest neighbour, relapsed into moody silence. In the mean while the Earl continued to canvass for competitors.

"Come," said he, "this will never do. I have only three names yet—Burgoyne, Torrington, and Vaughan. Whom else? I can't enter myself for my own prize, and I must have three more names."

"You may put me down, if you like," said Mr. Guy Greville. "I shall be sure to shoot somebody; but it don't signify."

"And me," added Pelham Hay.

"Thanks. Burgoyne, Torrington, Vaughan, Greville, Pelham Hay—five won't do. I want six at least. Come, gentlemen, who will stand for number six?"

"Why, Trefalden, of course!" exclaimed Vaughan. "The Swiss are born tirailleurs. Put his name down."

"No, no," said Saxon, hastily. "Not this time."

"But, my dear fellow, you are de la première force, are you not?" asked Castletowers.

"I used to shoot well enough when I was in practice," said Saxon, with some embarrassment; "but I'd rather not compete now."

The Earl looked surprised; but was too well bred to insist.

"If you won't," said he, "I must find some one who will. Syd. Pulteney, I shall enter you for my sixth shot, and that settles match number one. Gentlemen, the secretary waits to enter names for the second rifle match; the prize for which will consist of a magnificent pair of elaborately ornamented pistols, generously offered by

an honourable competitor who declines to compete. I do not mention the honourable competitor's name, because he is a modest young man, and given to blushing. Now, gentlemen, you will please to remember that this is a solemn occasion, and that the eyes of Europe are upon you!"

And so, rattling on in the gaiety of good spirits, the Earl enrolled the second party. Next in order came the long jump of eighteen feet, for Signor Colonna's Elzevir Horace; then the race of one hundred yards, for Lady Castletowers' prize; and, last of all, the one-mile race for the twenty-guinea purse, dignified by the name of "the Italian Cup," and entered for by the whole of the athletes.

When the programme was fairly made out, Castletowers called Saxon aside, and, taking him familiarly by the arm, led him into the billiard-room adjoining.

"Trefalden," said he, "may I ask you a question?"

"Twenty, if you like," replied Saxon.

"No—one will do, if you answer it honestly. Why don't you put in a shot at either of the rifle-matches?"

Saxon looked embarrassed.

"I'd rather not," he said, after a momentary pause.

"But why? You must be a good marksman."

Saxon made no reply.

"To tell you the truth," said the Earl, "I'm disappointed. I had looked to you for a display of skill, and expected something brilliant. I think you should have gone into the field, if only to maintain the honour of the Swiss rifles."

Saxon laughed good temperedly.

"Do you really want your question answered?" said he.

"Of course."

"Then wait a minute while I fetch my gun."

He ran out of the room, and presently reappeared outside the window, rifle in hand.

"Look there," he said, pointing to the roof of the stables. "Do you see that weathercock?"

It was a gilt cock, like that which Goethe used to admire, as a child, on the Ober Main Thor at Frankfort; and was just then shifting with the breeze, and flashing in the sunshine like a yellow diamond. The Earl threw up the window and leaned out.

"I should think so," he replied. "I have seen it pretty nearly every day of my life, ever since I was born."

"How far off is it, do you think?"

"Well, I hardly know; perhaps six hundred yards. But you can't hit a thing that blazes like a comet, and is never still for two seconds together."

"It's an ugly bird," said Saxon, bringing his gun to his shoulder. "Don't you think he'd look more intelligent if he had an eye in his head?"

The words were no sooner out of his lips than he fired. Lord Castletowers snatched up his hat, and bounded down upon the sword.

"You haven't done it?" he exclaimed.

"Let us go and see."

They had to go round by the front of the house, and across the yards, to reach those out-buildings over which the vane was placed. At about two-thirds of the distance the Earl stood still.

There was a small round hole drilled through precisely that part of the cock's head where his eye ought to have been.

At the sight of his friend's dumb amazement, Saxon roared with laughter, like a young giant.

"There," said he, "I told you it would be an improvement. And now you see why I wouldn't compete for the cup. We Swiss are always shooting, from the time we are old enough to carry a gun; and I didn't want to spoil the sport for others. It wouldn't have been fair."

LIGHTNING-STRUCK.

It is probably owing to the great increase of publicity that we have lately heard of so many cases of persons struck dead by lightning. These sad occurrences, for the most part, take place on the Continent, and numerous instances are recorded in the continental newspapers of buildings damaged, and individuals struck. Even in England deaths caused by lightning seem to have been more common than formerly.

Among the most remarkable later cases, may be included the following:—A woman at Hull was struck blind; another woman, who was standing in a room talking to her daughter, was struck on the side and leg, the lightning having previously passed through an adjoining house, and greatly injured both it and a great number of articles of furniture. Bell-wires seem to be the usual conductors of the fluid from one apartment to another. During a recent storm it entered a house, and was, by this medium, conducted from room to room, rending things to pieces as it went, and throwing the mistress of the house from a sofa to the floor, who, as the account states somewhat needlessly, was greatly shaken by it. One young woman was struck in a railway carriage, and remained insensible a considerable time. But the most painful case is that of the landlady of the Beehive at Digbeth. She was in one of the upper rooms of her house when the lightning entered it, but, instead of striking her dead, it merely scorched her head and the upper part of her body deeply, and set her clothes on fire. Her husband was the first to enter the room where she was lying, and there was still sufficient life in her to enable her to recognise him. About the same time that this happened, though at a place so far distant as Coray, in the department of Finisterre, five men, working in a field, were struck dead at the same moment, and ten others severely injured.

Within a few days two gendarmes were struck dead as they were hastening to get shelter from a thunderstorm. They were running to overtake a postman, who, like themselves, was looking about for shelter, and had just reached him, when one of them turned his head towards a

woman by the roadside who was tending sheep, and said, "Are you not afraid of the lightning?" The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a broad flash came down upon all four, killing the gendarmes, and stunning the postman and the woman; but doing them no more serious injury. One of the gendarmes was completely stripped; the fluid struck him on the back of his head and ran down to his feet, burning his clothes to tinder, tearing his boots to bits, and driving his spurs and his porte-monnaie a distance of several yards. His comrade had no external mark beyond a slight wound under the lip. A curious circumstance is recorded by the journal which gives the account of their burial: One of the gendarmes did not belong to the Catholic Church, and therefore was buried in unconsecrated ground; but his comrade, who was interred in the churchyard, was laid on its very verge, so that their graves should be brought side by side.

A wonderfully narrow escape from death was experienced by a sentinel who was on guard at Chatham; his face was scorched, and he was quite unable to articulate for upwards of an hour. The lightning struck the sword he was wearing, perforated a round hole, melted about two inches of the edge, and soldered the hilt to his bayonet. It also fused the lock of his musket and the iron ramrod together. After this it wounded his left foot, completely destroying the upper-leather of his boot. Sentinels incur more than the usual risk on account of the attraction of the arms they carry. During a thunderstorm the best course would be to put their muskets in one corner of the sentry-box, and themselves as far away from it as the confined space will allow, taking care to be a little more careful than a certain sentry near Carignan, who put his foot so near the butt of his musket that it was severely wounded. It was during this same storm that the lightning descended on the church at Villa di Stellone, killed seven persons, and wounded several others, among them the priest, who had not the slightest recollection of what he had been doing, nor could the people, who carried away the dead bodies out of the church, remember where they had brought them from. This was attributed to the effects of the electricity; but it may have been merely the bewilderment produced by the tremendous noise of the explosion.

A curious instance of the effects produced by the electric fluid, occurred a week or two since to two girls who were on their way to the market at Bressuire, with a basket of live fowls slung from their respective shoulders. They went chatting along, when a few great drops of rain, which came patterning down, warned them that a storm was at hand. There happened to be an enormous rock near, which projected over the road, and beneath this they took refuge. Presently, without previous warning, they were half stunned by a loud report, and simultaneously with the report they saw a ball of fire fall into the road a few paces from where they were standing. The only effect it produced on them was as though they had

been violently shaken. As soon as the storm had passed over they continued their journey, not a little agitated by what they had seen and felt. It was not until they reached the market that they became aware of the exceedingly narrow escape they had had. On their baskets being lifted from their shoulders, they found that the whole of their fowls had been stripped of their feathers in the cleanest possible manner.

A case has just occurred at Hamoir, a commune in the department of the Ourthe, where a shepherd and almost the whole of his flock were killed. The accuracy of the facts stated are guaranteed by La Meuse. The keeper of the flock was Hubert Wera, the son of the farmer to whom it belonged. The approach of the storm was so evident, that he at once collected his flock and began moving homeward; but, when he had reached a narrow gorge through the mountains, the sheep formed themselves into two groups with their heads pressed close together, and would not move a step further. Wera thereupon sat down under a bush to shelter himself from the storm. His brother, finding he did not return, went to look for him, and just as he got within sight of him, a terrific burst of thunder issued from the clouds, such as nobody in the vicinity had ever heard before. A frightful spectacle met his view: his brother and the whole of his flock had been struck by the lightning. It had descended on his head, torn the whole of his hair off, ploughed a deep furrow on his forehead and down his face and chest, stripped off the whole of his clothes, tearing them to ribands, and all this without shedding a drop of his blood. The iron was torn from his crook, and the handle was split in two pieces. A small metal crucifix he carried was picked up nearly twenty yards from his body. The flock consisted of one hundred and fifty-two sheep, one hundred and twenty-six of which were killed; their wounds being of the most diverse form: some having the head cut clean off; others having it divided into two equal parts. The limbs of some were torn from their bodies; every imaginable form of mutilation was to be seen among them.

The authorities of the commune, together with the doctor, hastened to the spot; the latter adopting every means at his disposal, such as friction and artificial respiration, to restore the unfortunate shepherd to life, but all his efforts were unavailing.

They found, on examining the ground, that the lightning had descended in a broad sheet: the space it covered being about eighty yards in length, and sixteen in breadth. A curious circumstance attending this event was that although the misfortune occurred at half-past six o'clock on Thursday evening, on Friday morning the bodies of the animals were in an advanced stage of putrefaction.

On the Saturday following the event just related, two men living at Perrigny, in the Jura, took shelter from a storm beneath a walnut-tree. An explosion was heard, and the

lightning ran down the tree, striking down the two men who had sought shelter beneath its branches. One of them was killed on the spot, without any other mark being left on his body than a slight singeing of the hair at the back of his neck. The other was not killed; but he had a burn the whole length of his thigh, and a jagged wound on the sole of one of his feet.

The Journal of the Academy of Sciences, just published, contains an account, sent by Dr. Chretien, of a youth who was killed by lightning in the presence of his mother and three friends who had come to see him; he being ill in bed. They were sitting close together, when the lightning burst through the window of an adjoining room, scattering the glass in all directions; then forced its way through a wall into the bedroom, striking the sick youth dead, burning part of the legs of the trousers of one of the visitors, wounding the leg of another, and bruising and scorching the woman's left leg. In another case, a man had his watch and money melted in his pocket, and every one of his joints dislocated. But probably the most comprehensive instance occurred at Venice, in the theatre. The audience may have been about six hundred in number, when the electric fluid descended upon the theatre in such quantity that it put out the lights, killed several persons, scorched others, melted earrings, splitting the stones, melted watch-cases, snatched a fiddle out of the hands of one of the musicians and tore it to splinters, fortunately without wounding the owner.

Though the number of persons killed by a single flash of lightning may have been greater, there is probably not many instances on record of its having covered so great an area as in a family at Eastbourne. The coachman and butler were outside the house. The former was struck dead, and the latter was so much affected by the shock, that, without being hardly conscious of what he was doing, he went into the house. Here he found his master insensible, and, as it turned out, very much hurt on the left side. In the pantry he found the footman lying dead on the floor; and a further examination of the house showed that the lightning had been through all parts of it. Everywhere the windows were broken, looking-glasses shattered, articles of furniture torn to splinters, cornices and ceilings cracked, bell-wires melted, and so forth. The owner's daughter had a wonderful escape. The electric stream entered the room where she was dressing, and splintered the bed she had just left, besides doing other damage. It is evident that this was not a case of a small stream passing from one object to another, inasmuch as the coachman was struck dead outside the building. But, large as the area was over which this extended, it was not equal to that at Reichenbach, which town was fired in so many places, that the inhabitants had the greatest difficulty in escaping into the country, without being able to save any part of their goods; even a regiment of cavalry quartered in the town were unable to save any portion of their baggage.

Two women were struck by lightning in a bleaching-ground at Kirkaldy; one of whom was sitting on a part of the ground a little higher than the rest, holding her infant to her breast. The mother was struck dead, and, as she fell over, the infant rolled from her arms down the hill, but was picked up unhurt. A similar case occurred in the Isle of Wight, where a man who was riding across Wotton Common with his son behind him, was struck dead, together with his horse, but the little boy escaped with few bruises caused by the fall. Similar capriciousness was exhibited at Shields, where a man and his wife were both killed, while a person sitting between them remained uninjured; at the same time a child lying in bed was burnt to death, and another much scorched; the house itself being set on fire in several places. The death of a woman, and the escape of the infant she was holding in her arms, represents a case that has occurred several times, but the child is not always so fortunate. There was a curious record of instantaneous death, produced by lightning, found engraved on a tombstone in a churchyard in Donegal: "Here are deposited, with a design of mingling them with the parent earth from which the mortal part came, a mother who loved her son to the destruction of his death. She clasped him to her bosom with all the joy of a parent, the pulse of whose heart beat with maternal affection; and in the very moment, whilst the gladness of joy danced in the pupil of the boy's eyes, and the mother's bosom swelled with transport, Death's arrow, in a flash of lightning, pierced them both in a vital part, and totally dissolving the entrails of the son, without injuring his skin, and burning to a cinder the liver of the mother, sent them out of the world at one and the same moment of time."

The appearances presented by persons who have been killed by lightning differs very much. Often, the expression of the countenance after death is precisely what it was at the instant they were struck, and the body is either without any external mark, or one that is only perceptible on a close examination. Much depends on the position of the person smitten, and on whether the stroke is received direct from the atmosphere or through the medium of some object.

The majority of persons struck in the open air appear to have received the shock on the head, after which it has passed through the body and out at the foot, or it has been drawn aside by money in the pocket, or by some metallic object worn beneath the outer clothing. This was so with a tailor who was struck dead in Whitfield's chapel, Tottenham-court-road. He was leaning against the wall, holding a child in his arms; he stooped to put the child on its feet, and had just resumed his position, when the subtle fluid ran down the wall, burnt the hair off the side of his head nearest to it, melted the studs in the sleeves of his shirt, burst the veins over nearly the whole of his body, and riddled his clothes as though he had been a mark for any quantity of small

shot. It would seem, indeed, as though the effect of the fluid on the object struck, depended very much on the ease with which it can pass out of it. Of this we have an example in the case of a gentleman who was smitten dead while riding, without exhibiting the slightest sign of injury on any part of him, and who was, to all outward seeming, in a calm and peaceful sleep, whereas the horse he was riding had deep cuts ploughed into his head and body. A haymaker too, who was working in a hayfield close by, was struck dead without the slightest outward injury, the only indication of the cause of death being a small hole burnt in his shirt where the fluid had passed from his body to his watch, the case of which was melted.

In the case of persons seemingly killed by lightning, too much haste should not be exhibited in burial. Not far from where this is written, five boys were struck at once, one of whom received a severe wound on the right leg. They remained perfectly insensible for a considerable time, but eventually recovered. A man named Locker, who was struck on a down he was crossing on his way to Bath, lay there completely unable to move for several days, though he had the use of his mental faculties much of the time.

Perhaps the most remarkable effect of lightning is that which it has sometimes produced on infirm persons. A man named Donaldson, who had been deaf for twenty years, was struck by lightning and rendered insensible. When he recovered his senses it was found that his hearing was restored. A clergyman, who had been afflicted by palsy, had given up all hope of a cure. One night during a thunderstorm the lightning entered his room, and gave him a severe electric shock. He thought he felt a sensation of relief, and next morning he found that this was not imaginary, but that he was really cured.

The invention of lightning-conductors has, no doubt, saved a vast number of buildings. We no longer hear of large numbers of persons killed in buildings at one stroke, as in Sicily, where no fewer than eighty-six perished; and where, we may observe in passing, the commander of Girengi, in order to break a thick cloud which he conceived to be a waterspout, had some heavy guns drawn out of the casemates and fired at it; but, instead of having the effect he desired, fire descended from the cloud, and for an instant wrapped the pieces in a sheet of flame, and left several of the gunners dead. Before Sir Snow Harris applied conductors to ships, the case of a vessel being struck was common; and hardly a year passed without the spire of a church being damaged or wholly destroyed by lightning.

A blunt-pointed stick, if used to inscribe characters on a looking-glass, leaves no visible trace behind; yet if we breathe on it, those figures stand out as boldly as though written with pen and ink on paper. A trout taken from a stream and thrown down by the riverside to die, has left marks of its spots on the leaves on which it lingered out its life.

Like effects have been produced by electricity: a woman wearing a rosary had an image of the beads imprinted on her right breast and side: another, wearing a gold chain, had the marks of the links burnt on her skin: a man standing beneath or beside a tree on which the electric fluid descended, had the foliage sketched on his chest.

CONCERNING PLUMS AND PRUNES.

If the value of fruits could be estimated by the metaphorical use we make of their names, we should probably hit upon the two extremes by instancing the fig and the plum. When we say, "A fig for Mr. So-and-so," we mean that we don't care a straw whether that gentleman hang or drown. On the other hand, when we hear that good Mr. Such-and-such has scraped together the sum of one hundred thousand pounds, we exclaim with respect and admiration, "Mr. Such-and-such is worth a plum!"

It was not such a golden plum as this that little Jack Horner, of good-boy memory, pulled out of his Christmas-pie with his thumb. Commentators seriously doubt whether it were a plum at all, suggesting that it might rather be dried berry of the *Vitis vimifera*, videlicet, a raisin, falsely called "plum" by unbotanical grocers—respecting whose plums we may record the paradoxical fact, that it is possible to make plum-pudding without plums; namely, by putting in one plum only.

The "plum season" gives us an "object lesson" on the real nature of the agreeable stone-fruit which our forefathers used to write "plumb," as if, from its heaviness when indulged in too copiously, it had some affinity to lead. There are several parishes called "Plumstead" in England; whether they are more stone-fruity than their neighbours, this deponent knoweth not. "He had rather have a couple of eggs than one plum," is an old French proverb, meaning, "He is no fool; he knows what he is about, and takes care of his own interest." They also say, "He is not gone there after plums;" that is, "He is not there for nothing; he is about some secret business." Molière writes, "If I am grieving, it is not about plums." A dark-complexioned person is ironically described as being "As fair as a dried plum after a couple of washings."

When the French, cut off from colonial communication, were ransacking the vegetable world for something to sweeten their coffee with, their chemists contrived to extract from the plum (from the quetsche especially) a crystallised sugar which equalled cane-sugar in every respect except cheapness. Another plum, which grows wild on the mountains of Dauphiné, the Briançon plum, or plum of the Alps, yields a delicate eating-oil, known as "huile de marmotte," which is more esteemed than olive oil. It combines, with great softness, a slight perfume of noyau, which is very agreeable. The

residue, or oil-cake left after extraction, has been tried to fatten cattle with; but the prussic acid contained in it renders caution necessary regarding the quantity given. Cows have been poisoned by it. It may not be amiss to note here, that in case of accident from an over-dose of bitter almonds, laurel leaf, or other form of prussic acid, a weak solution of sulphate of iron is an antidote.

Among the curious names of old sorts of plums, we find the Jerusalem plum, or bull's eye, very large indeed, brownish purple, and more square than round; the bull's heart, or Saint Loo plum, one of the very largest, with yellow flesh and red skin; the pigeon's heart, black, large, and excellent, late in the season; the transparent plum, large, light-coloured, and long: so called because, when held up to the sun, the kernel is clearly visible; the cock's kidney, small, late, kidney-shaped, and light yellow spotted with red. Aldrovandi, who was acquainted with everything on earth, mentions not only an asses' paradise, but also asses' plums (*Prunus asinina*), formerly so styled on account of their cheapness. They are later and larger than, but of the same colour as, harvest plums (*Prunus hordearia*).

Prunum is Latin for plum fruit, *prunus* (substantive feminine) for the plum tree, both being derived from *προύνη*, the name by which Theophrastus mentions it. *Prunus* is an important genus in the class Icosandria Monogynia of the Linnæan system. It belongs to the tribe of almond-like plants, which are themselves included in the Rosaceæ, or rose-like plants. It is composed of trees and shrubs peculiar for the most part to the temperate and moderately warm regions of the northern hemisphere: a few being also found in America, and in tropical Asia. Their leaves are simple, alternate, entire, or indented with teeth like a saw. Their flowers generally appear very early, while the leaves are still but slightly or scarcely developed. To the blossom succeeds a fleshy drupe, whose stone, *not* wrinkled (distinguishing it from a peach), contains a single seed (sometimes twins).

Linnæus's genus *plum*, therefore, comprises the true plums, the apricots, and the cherries, of which Tournefort made three distinct genera. He even subdivided the latter into two; the cherries proper, and the laurel cherries. Jussieu followed Tournefort's example, which is sanctioned by modern botanists, less, however, on account of the importance of the distinctive characters displayed by the three groups, than to make scientific language accord with popular phraseology. The million are indifferent about botanical niceties and floral anatomy; but they know an apricot from a plum, and from a cherry, at a glance. An apricot has a downy skin; a plum has a smooth skin powdered with a secretion called "the bloom," which is removed by a very slight touch, and is sometimes imitated by arrow-root. A cherry has a smooth shining skin, like a maiden's lip, and grows on a longer stalk than

either of the former. There is no cherry with the down of an apricot, or the bloom of a plum; and vice versa. The plum differs from the others in having fruit green when ripe. There is no green ripe apricot or cherry; but there is—it makes one's mouth water to name it—a greengage; and also a bullace, which acts on the imagination like an acid astringent.

A plum, then, is a drupe, mostly egg-shaped or oblong, fleshy, quite smooth, covered with a sort of bluish dust, containing a flattened stone sharp at both extremities and slightly furrowed at the edges. The young leaves of the tree are rolled or twisted when they first appear. The flowers, solitary or in couples, proceed from buds special to themselves, at the same time with, or before, the leaves. The wild plum of Europe, *Prunus spinosa*, familiar as the blackthorn or sloe-bush, has numerous thorny branches, which ramify at almost right angles. Its white blossoms appear so early in spring, that Cobbett happily styled the stormy time of their appearance "the blackthorn winter." Its small, blue-black, almost globular fruit, is too astringent to be eaten, although early frosts slightly soften its flavour and develop a sugary principle. In that condition, it is certainly employed in France (we say nothing of England) to flavour and colour wines of inferior quality. The poor also make a wretched beverage by fermenting crushed sloes in a certain quantity of water. The sloe likewise furnishes a very strong vinegar; frosted sloes, prepared like tamarinds, are not a bad substitute for that Indian preserve. The bark of the blackthorn is bitter, astringent, antifebrile, and is, in fact, the most powerful indigenous febrifuge, coming nearer to Peruvian bark than any other native succedaneum. For this purpose, it should be peeled in spring from branches of four or five years' growth, and dried slowly to be kept for use. It contains sufficient tannin to serve for leather-making and for dyeing. An infusion of sloe-leaves gives a humble imitation of tea; the drinker's fancy is at liberty to decide whether the bohea or the gunpowder flavour be predominant. During the high price of the China article, British foliage was liberally mixed with it. The wood of the blackthorn is hard and durable. Capital walking-sticks are made from the vigorous suckers which the bush throws up in considerable abundance. A blackthorn hedge is efficient, and lasts long with proper care, although it be less rapid in growth, and less pleasing both in verdure and in blossom, than one of white thorn—i.e. hawthorn. Who would guess that so many uses could be drawn from the stunted sloe-bush on which we look scornfully as it struggles for life on the skirts of a common?

The garden plum, *Prunus domestica*, attains the stature of a small tree. Its boughs are spreading, without thorns, and covered with a greyish skin, whilst the older branches are brownish. Its white flowers give birth to a drooping fruit, of sweet and slightly perfumed savour, and of very diverse form and size. While cherries grow on stalks longer than them-

selves, plums grow on stalks shorter than themselves. The number of the cultivated sorts is very considerable; sufficient, in fact, to have been grouped by pomologists into nine grand divisions or races. The most esteemed old varieties appear to be natives of Asia Minor, of the environs of Damascus especially; witness the damson—i.e. damascene. Their introduction to Italy is referred as far back as the time of Cato the elder. But several most delicious kinds have been raised within quite a recent period; and more, we believe, are only waiting to be called forth by horticultural skill. A new ambrosial plum would be as satisfactory a result by hybridisation as a new dahlia, or even a new rose. Brilliant colours, perfect forms, and sweet perfumes are charming, but unsubstantial; whereas a plum, if it will not fill the stomach, will allay thirst and stop a *little* gap. In the central and southern parts of Europe, excellent plums may be tasted—with juicy, sweet, and melting flesh—the exact counterparts of which are, probably, not to be found in England. As an object in view heightens the pleasure of a tour, we may suggest the desirability of somebody's making a tour of plum discovery.

The wood of the plum-tree is hard, close-grained, handsomely veined, and capable of receiving a high polish. Its colour is heightened by immersion in lime-water. The plum-tree, like the cherry-tree, is liable to gumming from wounds; choice kinds are therefore better propagated by budding than by grafting. The amateur gardener may bud for himself; any one who can bud a rose can bud a plum; and ladies can amuse themselves by performing the operation all the more fearlessly, as there are no hooked thorns to be battered with. It is a real satisfaction, as the writer can testify, to eat plums or cherries from a bud one has oneself inserted.

Stocks for budding are obtained either by sowing the stones (previously laid in heaps, with earth or sand), or by the suckers thrown up by old-established trees. Seedlings produce much the stronger and longer-lived specimens, but of slow growth during the first few years; nurserymen, consequently, often prefer to make use of suckers, which come to market more rapidly, but which make inferior fruit-trees in the long run. The amateur gardener, who can afford to wait, will make a point of having none but seedling stocks, if for no other reason than that plants from suckers give endless plague by throwing up numerous suckers themselves, which must be removed as fast as they make their appearance. Plums wished to be kept dwarf may be worked on the sloe; others on the mirabelle, the magnum bonum, or any other vigorous seedling. The damson is reputed a bad stock, though the coarser kinds may be budded on it. From the middle of July to the middle of August is the best time to perform the operation, taking advantage of any thunder-storm which soaks the earth and causes the sap to flow more freely. Common kitchen plums—as damsons, bullaces, and harvest plums—may

be raised from stones or suckers without the trouble and delay of budding.

A good plum is one of the most wholesome and agreeable fruits with which horticultural skill has supplied our tables. Its soft and sugary flavour is heightened by a delicate aroma, which loses nothing by cookery. If its juicy flesh contain no great amount of nutriment, it is at least easy of digestion.

The numerous ways in which plums can be prepared add considerably to their commercial value, and render their culture extremely important in certain districts of the Continent. They are made into preserves of different kinds, both with and without sugar. In the latter case, the cooking process is greatly prolonged, until the concentration of their natural sugar makes the addition of any other unnecessary. By fermentation, alcoholic liquors, raki, and zwetschenwasser, are obtained from plums. Plums also are preserved, like cherries, in brandy; the smaller kinds, as the mirabelle, being preferred for the making of plum-brandy.

Dried plums (known here as French plums, as *pruneaux* in France) are slowly and carefully desiccated, in the sunshine and in an oven alternately. Lately, special ovens and apparatus have been contrived, which hasten the operation and render it more certain. Dried plums are the object of a considerable trade in different parts of France, particularly in the Touraine and the Agenois. In the latter province, the grand centre of production is Villeneuve d'Agen, and especially the cantons of Clairac and St. Livrade; so that the title “*pruneaux d'Agen*” is based on an exactitude. In those localities the culture of the plum takes the lead of all other husbandry. The varieties principally employed for drying are the *prune robe de sergeant* and the *prune de roi*. The department of the Var, and notably the town of Brignolles, are likewise celebrated for the dried plums with which they regale all the north of Europe.

It is a pity that so few things on this earth should be perfect. A small tree, of convenient height, needing little care, capable of resisting our severest winters, which *can* (if circumstances allow it to do so) annually supply a crop of luscious fruit, which crop continues to be supplied by the different varieties in long succession, from the beginning of July to the end of November, surely approaches perfection as a hardy fruit-tree. And yet it is very far from perfect. One little peculiarity of its constitution often renders all its other good qualities unavailing. Its time of flowering is so early, that not unfrequently its blossoms are completely cut off by frosts, before the leaves have had time to come forth and protect them. So early, indeed, do they come, that several kinds are worth planting (the mirabelles, for instance) merely as *flowering shrubs*, for the sake of the brilliant standard of white which they display while all around them is bare, leaving any chance of fruit entirely out of consideration.

To obviate the consequences of such early blooming, we make wall-trees of choice varieties

of plum. But even a south wall is an ineffectual protection against the heavy hoar-frosts and late snow-storms which occasionally occur even in May. Morning frosts in June are far from rare; but, by that time, the well-developed leaves are able to shelter the young fruit. The genius of Thomas Rivers invented orchard-houses and the plan of growing plum-trees in pots—a clever contrivance and adaptation especially suitable and convenient for small gardens and suburban villas. Respecting the results so obtained, experience is contradictory: some have had decided success, while others complain of considerable failure. But it is not illogical to hold to the opinion that, if one man has succeeded, all men may.

Perhaps, the true plum orchard, for England, may be yet to be invented—a sort of adaptive Crystal Palace, to be placed, say in February, over trees planted in the open ground, with Venetian ventilators capable of putting the plants almost in the open air during a great part of the day, and entirely removable when all danger of frost is over. The practical difficulty lies in this: foliage grown under shelter is much more tender than that which expands naturally in the open air; and unless air and direct sunshine are very gradually admitted, the leaves will be shrivelled, scorched, torn by winds, or otherwise sufficiently injured to spoil the ripening of the fruit, injure the health of the trees, and ultimately kill them, converting the plum-paradise into a desert. To those who wish to grow plums in large quantities under glass, Mr. Rivers suggests a very simple mode of culture—namely, planting a house with plum-bushes or pyramids, and removing them biennially to check their growth. It is found that, after a few years, owing to their being every season loaded with fruit, they grow so very slowly as not to require removal.

The earliest plum is the cerisette, of which there are red and yellow varieties. It opens clean, like the damson, leaving the stone loose and free, and is good though wild—i.e. self-sown, or raised from stones. The mirabelle is an early sort of small light-coloured plum, which bears abundantly (weather permitting), is quite a free-stone, and tolerably sweet. It is excellent in jam, having an aromatic flavour, and also as a brandy-plum. But the earliest plums are not the best. Better are those which, hanging late, and protected from flies by muslin bags, become blue with bloom, unctuous with sugar, and wrinkled with age, but far from ugly. The stoneless plum, or Prune sans noyau, is a small black heart-shaped curiosity, opening well, with no stone but only a kernel.

If you think of planting an assortment, here are a dozen useful plums, pretty nearly as they are ready to pass from hand to mouth:

Early Prolific. Monsieur Hâtif, or early Orleans, darker in colour than the common Orleans. Orleans plum-trees vary greatly in the quality of their fruit: if possible, taste the fruit of the tree from which the plants you purchase are budded. Reine Claude de Baray

hâtié, an excellent variety of greengage. The greengage, the queen of plums, when true; but, as *tolerably good* greengages may be raised from stones, many inferior sub-varieties, which would be best destroyed, are to be met with in the market. As with Orleans plums, endeavour to bud greengages yourself from trees of whose genuine merit you are sure. Washington, a fine handsome fruit, deserving more general cultivation. Jefferson, which justly excites Rivers's enthusiasm. The red magnum bonum, an excellent kitchen fruit for families who eat and come again. The white magnum bonum, if good and true, and well ripened, has hardly its superior at dessert, with the sole inconvenience that it is apt to tempt you to open your mouth ungracefully wide. Reine Claude violette, or purple gage, nearly as good as the green, and carrying plums into the month of October, Coe's golden drop, to be appreciated, has only to be seen and tasted. "I have had them in muslin bags on the trees, partaking of the flavour of those called French plums, but richer and more agreeable." St. Martin's quetsche, otherwise zwetsche, Frenchified into coetsche, a German damson, in high repute for preserves and liqueurs. Lastly, the blue Impératrice, which should be allowed to hang on the tree till it shrivels. If secured from frost, it may be kept very late indeed.

Besides the above, damsons and bullaces (not to be despised) will grow almost anywhere, even in hedgerows that are not too exposed to schoolboys. In an uncooked state, these minor and tardy plums scarcely do themselves justice. Bullaces bottled, like green gooseberries, are valuable for winter tarts; while the house-keeper who has either bullace or damson cheese, or both, in store, need little envy her who parades a slab of guava jelly.

The gardens of the curious should not be without ornamental plum-trees. Mr. Fortune has introduced several from China, very charming, with semi-double, and also with large double blossoms—white, flesh-coloured or blush, and striped like a carnation. These are hardy, bloom very early—in mid-winter with a little forcing—and make as quaint, delightful, floriferous pot-plants as a lady need wish to have in her boudoir.

THE ZOO PHYTES OF SANDYBAY.

SAGES say there are links between every race of created beings. We all know the zoophytes, that unite the peculiarities of flower and animal life. The bat: half mouse, half bird. The eel: at once serpent and fish. The monkey—well, we won't pursue him; the present object is to treat of one only of these marvellous anomalies, the link between fish and woman-kind, the bathing-woman.

To enter fully into the habits of this extraordinary creature, the scientific inquirer should establish his head-quarters, for a whole season, by the sea. Say, at Sandybay, on the Wessex

coast. There, from the first of May until late in October, many fine specimens may be found. What becomes of the zoophytes during the other six months: whether they disappear with the pins, or migrate with the swallows, has never been satisfactorily established. They have been seen at intervals, and solitary, as late in the year as the commencement of November. They appear then, however, to have lost much of their habitual liveliness. They move dreamily through the water. The voice, formerly shrill, and rather harsh, has toned down; and, indeed, these belated specimens bear no more resemblance to the plump noisy animal in its season, than does Pepper's ghost of Hamlet's father to the stout original he represents.

The naturalist has, of course, his cabinet of treasures; and though his practised eyes are quick to detect a certain value in the many specimens before him, he is obliged to content himself with selecting only a few of the best for preservation. Thus, Nan and her pair of daughters are Nos. 1, 2, and 3 in my collection of gems amongst the zoophyte bathing-women.

Old Nan has a heart; albeit it beats, in general, calmly enough in her wide bosom. It is not the little cares of daily life that can accelerate its pace. She has rescued more than one little fisher-boy, who, venturing too far into the sea in pursuit of a lively crab, would have been caught and swallowed by the great tide waves had not the brave Nan rushed after him, and held him fast until the danger was past: emerging after the struggle with the child in her arms, scolding, choking, but triumphant.

If you have time to listen, she will tell you of sad scenes on that dangerous coast. Of the sands strewed with "wrack," of the long processions formed by the awestruck villagers when the unknown drowned were carried up in silence to the church. Sometimes their sorrow has been for their own people; and one rough winter night a bitter cry arose at midnight, when nine fishing-boats were lying wrecked upon the coast, and there was scarcely a house in which there was not one dead.

But there was one night fraught with fearful peril, of which *she* will not tell you—a night when the cries of human beings roused the cliff birds till they shrieked together; when a fishing-boat, with eight souls on board, in the storm and darkness, flew crashing upon the rocks. In a moment she parted beneath them, and the men were clinging for life to a point where the tide must speedily overwhelm them. Their cries were heard in heaven—and by two only upon earth, Nan and her daughter. These two women were watching over the safety of their bathing-machines. They had drawn them up as high as possible, and, each with a lantern fastened to her waist, were searching about for driftwood, when Fan suddenly cried out, "Mother, did you hear that?" A cry to seaward, faint, but still heard above the gale—borne to them, indeed, upon it—reached the ears of both. "It's away to the right," said Nan; "who's out to-night?" "There's Trout's boat, with eight," shrieked

Fan; "they left at daybreak; they'll be gone, before we can wake the village; they only cry like that in the water." And what followed? The next moment saw them, with their strong practised arms running the nearest boat down to the sea, and watching their opportunity of launching out into the deep. It was not very far they had to go: the cries led them to the sea-surrounded "danger rock," where eight human beings were dying. There was scarcely time to save—for the tide was advancing—nearer and nearer the waves rolled—one had passed over them, and, numbed and hopeless, all would have been lost, had the women stayed to rouse the town. Brave Nan and her daughter never thought "to wake to fame," but they did. Refusing all recompense, they begged that the money subscribed for them might be expended in the purchase of a fishing-boat for the rescued men.

Nan had a younger daughter (No. 3); very pretty, but in weak health. For once, untrue to her mixed nature, Nan wished to bring her up to "the land life."

Poor Nan! She had no idea of the conveniences above high-water mark, and as to bringing up a daughter high and dry, she had not the remotest conception how to set about it. She consulted a fisherman, who, from being afflicted with a complication of disorders, had passed much of his time on shore. He recommended "nets," the making and repairing of which he had himself found to be "a healthy, easy out-of-door occupation, and leading to much cheerful conversation." It was eventually decided, when Bess was about fifteen, that she should continue to wear shoes and stockings, and other mysteries of the toilet unknown to zoophytes, and be regularly employed by the market to meet the boats on their arrival, and carry up the fish.

Bess, was a good, as well as very pretty girl, and the "land life" agreeing with her, she grew strong and well. The visitors to Sandybay, knew her well, and carried off her photograph. They took great notice of her, and by many kindnesses tried to tempt her to take service with them. But Bess was firm in her love of Sandybay, and of her zoophyte relations; she was always pleased and grateful, but she was never to be tempted away. One day, Bess got her feet wet, the tide was flowing fast when as usual she went down with her basket to meet the boats. The blue waves curled caressingly round her little feet. "Come and play with us," they seemed to say. The zoophyte blood stirred within her, and she began to paddle! At last, into the water rushed Bess, laughing and plunging about. Fan, in the distance, with a child in her arms, and in the act of giving it the salutary, though suffocating dip, stopped short—"Mother," she cried, "there's Bess in the water!" "Ah! she be coming to us after all!" said Nan, with an immense grunt of satisfaction. And indeed the morning sun found Bess in full costume, en zoophyte. She had cast her basket to the winds, and her lot is with the rest of her tribe.

For a season or two, Bess was the delight of the bathers. She had taken like a duck to the water. She swam, floated, and played in it, like a pretty mermaid. The merry little things that crowded daily, spade in hand, to the beach, waited patiently until Bess was at leisure to plunge into the water with them, and would plunge with no one else.

I linger, lovingly, over Bessie's brightest days. I saw her often, that last summer, and always in the water. Her hair was "goldy," as Nan said; and, tucked up or floating over her shoulders, it seemed like a glory about her. She never laid her hands to any of the hard zoophyte work. To Nan she was always the "little one," twice born; for, from the day she took to the water, she became a new child to her. Thus Bess sported all the day—and at night, who ever met with a zoophyte? And who knows half the metamorphoses that go on in darkness, or beneath the moon?

One only glimpse have we of the zoophyte after dark. The night Nan and her daughter were seeking driftwood on the stormy shore, and found eight human lives!

In a retired sea-side village like Sandybay we soon learn the history of its interest and affections. The people are too simple to hide their emotions. They wear their joys and sorrows outside with their ribbons, and it is impossible to withhold sympathy from either. Thus the little town weeps or smiles as one human creature.

There is only one race of beings who are not hospitably received at Sandybay, and who are altogether regarded as outsiders. These are the coast-guard. They are invariably civil, and helpful in times of need, but they never obtain the sympathy of the inhabitants. There was no smuggling at Sandybay, still the popular feeling was constantly against them, and they were never regarded as anything better than "them spies." Alas! that one of those pariahs, perhaps through his objectionable "spy-glass," should have lost his heart to the pretty Bess. I never knew her family name, neither I think did he. Nan's husband was drowned a week before Bess was born, and with him appears to have been lost also the family name! Neither does it appear to have been known how or when Dick Harris prosecuted his courtship. She had no telescope, and apparently she was always in the water. However, he found a way, and in or out of the water, Dick proposed, and Bess accepted!

Then began poor Bess's sorrowful days. The fine young sailor was a "spy," and Nan and the zoophyte sister looked coldly on the lovers. With her disappointed little favourites Bess played no more. After dipping them with a calm indifference, she would sit idly and sorrowfully upon the rocks, sometimes waist-deep in water, the poor zoophyte!

But Harris, watching her through his glass, took a great resolve. He went in search of Nan. Nan, much put out by his unwelcome presence, prepared herself valiantly for the

fight. "Nan," said the young sailor, "give me Bess, and I'll turn fisherman and live amongst you."

Poor old Nan was taken aback. She was prepared for war; but behold the enemy surrendering at discretion! A bold son-in-law, indeed, and one after her own heart! Nan clasped her hands together, her hard face softened, and her voice shook a little, as she said, "Go and take her, Dick Harris, and the blessing of the old mother be with ye!"

The eve of Dick's wedding was a wild December night. He was to be married next morning; but, in the mean time, he and the men were all out upon the beach, drawing up their boats, and talking of a ship seen before dark, and holding, as they thought, a dangerous course.

While they spoke of it, a flash, like lightning, sprang out of the darkness, and in an instant more a message of distress and danger boomed across the sea. Another flash! and again the imploring gun echoed, like a hundred waves in one, among the rocks. The storm was increasing fearfully. A rocket, fired from the coast-guard station, rushed into the air, the strong wind carrying it far inland, but it was answered by the harsh quick tolling of the life-boat's bell, calling the crew hastily together. Dick Harris had left the service, but the man to replace him had not arrived, and he remained on duty as before. He was the first to spring into the life-boat. She was quickly manned, and, in a few minutes, was gliding down the beach, and tossing like a cork upon the crest of the waves. A long cheer broke from the assembled crowd as the brave crew, bending to their oars, shot out into the darkness on their perilous voyage.

For a long while the lantern on the stern was seen at intervals above the waves, but at last the keenest sight failed to detect it, and silence and anxious waiting succeeded to the noise and hurry of the launch.

Come out with the life-boat! Come away into the storm and darkness. It is better than gnawing one's heart ashore there with Bessie and the rest. To be still is torture when dear lives are staked. See how the muscles start from the strong arms bared to the shoulder! The parted lips and heaving chests have no breath to spend in words. The strong excitement gives unnatural strength, and the force of their united will carries them, like an arrow, on their dangerous way.

Brave hearts, thinking only of the perishing ship. In their generous haste the men had forgotten their life-belts. They didn't think they would be drowned; or if they did, they would not return.

The firing has ceased; the moon is up, misty and pale, behind swift flying clouds; a dark object, still far off, is discerned in the direction of the dangerous reef. The life-boat is flying on, often full of water, but as quickly emptying again; the men, drenched to the skin, have found breath enough to send a cheer forward to the sinking ship, and a faint cry has come

to them from her crowded decks. They are in time to save! Oh that I could end here! But joy and rest have scant place in this disjointed world, and I can speak of neither here, except as represented by the grave. Let me hasten to the end, the end that has no end—sorrow upon sorrow, like the rolling waves. The life-boat neared the wreck, when a wave, fiercer than the rest, dashing over the reef, filled her and flung her off; but, drawing her furiously back, hurled her so violently against the wreck, that the side was stove in, and she became unmanageable. Some of the men escaped by clinging to the vessel they had risked so much to save, and afterwards, with their aid, she was floated off and stranded on the shore. But two of the gallant life-boat's crew were lost.

Dick Harris and another.

I thought these eyes of mine, so old now, could weep no more. I thought the old man had outlived his heart, but I see and feel the terrible ensuing scene again. How Bess ran into the water to meet the life-boat, crowded with the saved; but missed her love! She never spoke nor wept, but her face turned white as death, and changed no more, and day and night she waited by the sea, until at last he came. The villagers tell of it still. How with a wild shriek she threw up her arms to heaven, claiming her dead, and, plunging waist deep into the waves, fought with them for possession of her own. Her wild shrieks rang out his death-knell in the night. Nan, always near her, helped her to carry him to a quiet spot, and, covering him reverently with her shawl, ran for help to the village, leaving Bess to watch him. Help came, but found poor Bessie lying beside her lover, a stream of blood flowing from her lips. She did not die at once, but her white scared face grew thinner day by day. And Dick's grave was opened to receive her, according to her wish, long before there were any flowers to lay upon it.

Nan is fading away, pining to follow her "goldy-hair." The zoophyte daughter works for both, but the light went out of her lonely life when her sister died, and she too is wearying to follow "the little one."

O sad, sad, Sandybay, so cheerful and so pleasant once!

UP AND DOWN CANTON.

CANTON is a genuine Chinese city, and one of the most extraordinary places in the world. There are four American steamers which ply between Hong-Kong and Canton. They are fast commodious vessels, in fact floating hotels, such as ply on the large American rivers. The voyage occupies about eight or nine hours. Of these, five or six are on the open sea, sheltered mostly under the lee of precipitous bluffs and lofty rocky islets; and the rest, from the "Bocca Tigris," up the Canton river. The fog in the winter season lies so dense over the flats and extensive swamps bordering the river, that steamers have to proceed with great caution,

going "dead slow," and sounding the steam-whistle, while the little fishing-junks, which are sure to be scattered by dozens in the way, eagerly beat their gongs, to make known their whereabouts. As the steamer ascends the river, a noble stream, some five or six miles broad near the mouth, she gets gradually clear of the fog. The wide marshy flats, and the bold rocks on the left bank, crowned with odd-looking Chinese stone batteries, come into view, to be succeeded by paddy-fields, sugar-cane cultivation, orchards, gardens, roads, and villages, that become, on both banks, more and more numerous, until they blend with the vast suburbs of Canton. Charming little pagodas, and fanciful buildings, painted and carved, the residences of mandarins, peep from the shade of groves, and every village is surmounted by two or more lofty square towers, the nature of which puzzles a stranger, until he is told they are pawnbrokers' shops. These shops are so fashioned for the greater security of the articles pledged, because the broker is made heavily responsible for their safe keeping. The security is meant to be, not only against thieves, but also against fire. Half way to Canton, on the right, or west bank, is a little English settlement at the town of Whampo. It consists of some ship-chandlers' stores, warehouses, and a dock for repairing vessels which discharge their cargoes here, being unable to proceed higher up the stream. Whampo is, in fact, the seaport of Canton, and was a flourishing place as such, till Hong-Kong diverted the trade. From Whampo upward, the river becomes more and more crowded with junks and Chinese boats. Some of the junks, men-of-war, differ from the rest only in being larger, and in having several unwieldy guns on their decks, mounted on uncouth carriages: in many instances with their muzzles not pointed through portholes, but grinning over the bulwarks at an angle of forty-five degrees, like huge empty bottles.

When the steamer has slowly and cautiously threaded her way among these numerous vessels, and dropped anchor, the rush of "tanka-boats" round her is astonishing. These are broad bluff craft, something of the size and shape of the sampans, but impelled chiefly by women: one sweeping, the other sculling with a large steering oar. They close round the ship in hundreds, yelling, screaming, struggling, and fighting for the gangways, till every passenger or article of light freight has left. The women are warmly and comfortably dressed in dark-blue linen shirts and wide drawers; with red and yellow bandanas round their heads and faces. They are often young and good looking, with bright laughing eyes, white teeth, and jolly red cheeks. They are, unlike the "flower-boat" girls, honest and well conducted. Their boats are roofed over, with snug neat cabins nicely painted, and bedizened with flowers, old-fashioned pictures, and looking-glasses. A low cushioned bench runs round three sides, and the passenger sits down pleasantly enough, looking through the entrance,

and face to face with the sturdy nymph, who, with a "stamp and go," is rowing him along, while at the stern, behind his back, another lusty Naiad steers him on his way.

The river divides the great city into two parts; that on the left bank, which is by far the larger, being Canton, and the opposite smaller town "Honan." On the Honan side, a few European gentlemen still live and carry on business, as branches of several firms in Hong-Kong; but the principal European quarter is a fine level plain on the Canton side, presenting to the river a revetted wall. A pretty church and some handsome houses, including the British Consulate, have been already completed within the land, which is called the "Shámeen." It adjoins the portion formerly allotted for the Hongs, or warehouses and offices of foreign (European) merchants, which were burnt down by the Chinese mob before the last war.

At ten in the morning, one day in the month of February, I started from the Honan side, under the guidance of a Chinese cicerone, who spoke a language somewhat better than the gibberish known by the name of "pigeon" (business) English, to explore the city of Canton. We crossed the river in a tanka-boat, and after threading, jostling, and pushing our way through swarms of small craft in every variety, landed at the custom-house stairs, close to a small office in which presides an English functionary, in the pay of the Chinese government. The strand is crowded with mean dirty hovels, in which, and about the muddy road, and on board innumerable boats, packed closely along the bank, men, women, and children, filthy and ragged, were crowding in swarms. We passed a short way up the strand, by some large shops, crammed with clothing and ship chandlery, and striking inland, traversed an open space, scattered with the relics of the European Hongs burnt before the last war: (a space, by-the-by, which Europeans have altogether deserted, preferring the "Shámeen" land, and which the Chinese government appear unwilling to resume, so that it remains altogether untenanted). We then entered the bazaar, or strictly commercial portions of the town.

The day was unusually sultry for the time of year; the streets (so to call passages of six or seven feet width), entirely paved with flagstones, were muddy and greasy from rain that had fallen the day before. The air was stagnant from the confinement of closely-packed and overhanging houses, and heated by swarms of people hurrying to and fro, while an insupportable stench from sewers, neglected drains, and putrid fish and flesh, with a horrible odour of stale cabbage water, pervaded the suffocating atmosphere. I became faint at times, fatigued and heated beyond endurance, so that my estimate of the extent of this enormous labyrinth, through which I plodded for four hours before I could get a sedan-chair, is one rather of the feelings than of the judgment. I walked—stepping now and then into shops, to examine them more closely—and rode in a sedan-chair

up one street and down another, from about half-past ten in the morning until four in the afternoon, and had to leave unvisited about half the bazaar, to get a hasty glimpse of a few temples, gardens, and mandarin-houses, before dusk.

The streets are flagged, and about six or seven feet broad. They appear to be innumerable, crossing each other at right angles at every two or three hundred yards. The houses on each side are narrow-fronted, but extending considerably to the rear. There are no windows, for the centre of each front is open, merely consisting of carved and painted frame-work, like the proscenium of a theatre, and displaying the contents of the shop on each hand, like side-scenes. The back is closed by a large panelling, in which figures of gods, men, animals, and flowers, are painted, with a vast deal of gilding and finery. In short, each shop looks like a little theatre. A few houses have upper stories, reached by pretty carved and balustraded stairs. And as every article for which space can be found, is hung up for display, both inside the shop and around its front, the spectator, as he enters the bazaar, feels as if he were diving into an ocean of cloths, silks, flags, and flutters.

My guide was a sharp fellow, who thoroughly knew all the sights of Canton. As he had been often employed as cicerone by the ship captains, he immediately put me down as one of that jolly fraternity, frequent intercourse with whom had given a slightly nautical twang to his discourse. We had not gone far before he addressed me, "I say, cappen: you come along o' me and see jewellers' shops. Here's first-rate shop—number one jeweller this chap—cappen want to buy anything? Heave along!" The jewelers' shops were numerous, and I saw many very beautiful specimens of carving and filigree-work. Some of the shops sold articles of European design, others ministered only to the native beauty and fashion of Canton. These contained many articles of considerable beauty and real taste. The most notable were the "bird's feather ornaments," which consist of gold or gilt head combs, brooches, earrings, and the like, on which are firmly fixed, with glue, strips of the bright blue feathers of the kingfisher (*Halecyon Smyrnensis*), cut into small patterns, through which the gold ground appears: the whole effect being exactly like that of enamel-work. The kingfisher is not, I think, found in China, but is imported in great numbers from Burmah and India. I asked the price of one skin lying on the counter, and was told half a dollar (two shillings and threepence). The bird was probably procured in India for three-halfpence. Ivory shops are in great number, but the Chinese ivory yields, in my opinion, to that of the Japanese. I went into several porcelain shops, and saw in each ten or a dozen languid-looking youths painting away, slowly and laboriously, at leaves, flowers, insects, and so forth, on plates. Each lad had a small bowl of one colour, and when he had painted in all

the parts of the design intended to be of that colour, he passed the plate on to his neighbour, who added his colour, and so on all round the room till the pattern was completely coloured. The result is stiff and mechanical. There is no attempt at artistic effect, nothing like the beautiful pictures painted in the factories at Worcester or Dresden. Dyers and weavers are numerous. The silk shops are the finest in the bazaar, but their contents are excessively dear, and are not very good. Indeed, the Canton silks are considered by the Chinese themselves to be inferior to those made in the northern provinces of the empire. I have seen silk dresses and pieces from Pekin, brought into India via Nepaul, of a quality which I was assured by a competent judge could not be procured at Canton. This was five-and-twenty years ago, and it is possible that our present widely different connexion with China may have introduced a better article into Shanghai, which is so near Pekin. But the Chinese were very jealous formerly about exporting their finest silks, and those I allude to were brought by the members of a mission, sent every three years with a tribute from Kathmandoo to the Emperor of China, as a friendly return present from the emperor to the Rajah of Nepaul.

The Chinese shopkeepers are fat comfortable-looking fellows, with pleasant, good-humoured faces. They showed me their curiosities very willingly, and none the less courteously exchanged a smiling "chin-chin" with me, if I left the shop without purchasing anything.

Tea-shops are numberless. They are piled up with chests such as we see in England, and with open baskets of coarse and inferior tea for the poor. The cheapest kind is made in thin round cakes or large wafers, strung upon slips of bamboo. It partially dissolves in hot water, and is flavoured with salt by those who drink it. Of this form of brick tea I have never seen any mention in the books published by travellers.

There are poulters' shops, with fowls roasted and raw; and there are vegetable sellers' stalls, and fish in baskets, dead and not over-fresh, or alive in large tubs of water. They were all of the carp family, including röhos, mîrgals, and kuttas, so familiarly known in India, also several species of the siluroids, called vulgarly "catfish." The fish brought from the sea are salted and sun-dried, and, with strong aid from immense festoons of sharks' fins, set up a stench that it is not easy to walk through.

After inspecting shops and elbowing and being elbowed in the crowd till afternoon, when I was ready to drop with heat and fatigue, my pilot steered me to a small square, flagged with stone, on which the sun shone fiercely. He called it "Beggars'-square," and told me that all the destitute and abandoned sick in the city, crawled, if they could, to this spot, because those who died there received burial at the expense of government. While he spoke, my eyes were fixed upon some heaps of dirty tattered clothes on the ground, which presently began to move,

and I discovered to my horror three miserable creatures, lean and covered with odious filth, lying in different stages of their last agony, on the bare stones, exposed to the burning rays of the sun. They came here to die, and no one heeded them, or gave them a drop of water, or a morsel of food, or even a little shelter from the noon-day glare. I had seen shocking things of this sort in India, but nothing so horrible. To ensure a climax of disgusts, my guide led me straight to a dog butcher's shop, where several of the nasty fat oily carcases of those animals were hanging for sale. They had not been flayed, but dangled there with their smooth shining skins, which had been scalded and scraped clean of hair, so that at first I took them for sucking-pigs. There were joints of dog, ready roasted, on the counter, and in the back of the shop were several cages in which live dogs were quietly sitting, lolling their tongues out, and appearing very unconcerned. I saw several cats also, in cages, looking very demure; and moreover I saw customers, decorous and substantial-looking house-holders, inspect and feel the dogs and cats, and buy those which they deemed fittest for the table. The cats did not like being handled, and mewed loudly. "What cappen think o' that?" said my guide. "Cappen s'pose never eat dog? —dog very good, very fat, very soft. Oh, number one dinner is dog!" "And are cats as good?" I asked. "Oh, Chinaman chowchow everything. Chowchow plenty cat. Chinaman nasty beast, I think, cappen, eh?" My cicero had been so long mixed up with European and American ship captains and missionaries, that he had learnt to suit his ideas to his company, if his ideas had not actually undergone great modification, as is the case in India with those educated natives of the present day known to us as specimens of "Young Bengal."

Before quitting the bazaar, I was ushered into two gambling-shops. These are licensed by the Chinese government, the owners paying a considerable tax. Both were tolerably full of players, and in both the same kind of game was being played—a simple one enough, if I understood it. A player staked a pile of cash, or dollars; the croupier staked a similar one; and then another member of the establishment dipped his hand into a bag and drew out a handful of counters: if they were in even fours, the bank won; if they were uneven, the player won, and the croupier's stake was duly handed over to him—rather ruefully, it struck me, by the banker, who sat on the counter raised above the rest. This game appears about as intrinsically entertaining as pulling straws; but I may have overlooked or misunderstood parts of it of a more intellectual nature. In the first house I visited, the players were of the lower class, and the stakes were copper cash. One man, quite a youth, left the room evidently cleaned out: his look revealed it, and I suppose he went away to the opium shop, the usual consolation of a Chinaman under the circumstances. As we entered the second gambling-house, my guide

informed me, "This rich house. Number one fellow play here—mandarin chap." And truly I saw in the room goodly piles of dollars heaped up before a better-dressed assembly. The game appeared to be the same, and money changed hands rapidly. I "chin-chinned" to the banker and to the company, and was civilly allowed to look on. The room led through a filigreed doorway to another apartment, where cakes, loaves, tea, and pipes, were spread out, and where long-tailed gentlemen were lounging and discussing the news of the day.

Being in want of cash, and having only dollar notes with me, I asked my guide what I should do? He straightway led me to a money-changer's, where I was at once furnished with change for my notes, at par. As this was an unusual accommodation, I asked the reason of such generosity, and was informed that the dollars given me were all light, and that the changer would obtain full weight dollars for the notes by-and-by. I was assured, however, that in all the shops the dollars I had received would be received at the full value; and this I found to be the case. All the time I was in the money-changer's, I saw three or four people telling, examining, and stamping dollars. So defaced and mutilated does the coin become by bearing the "chop" or mark of every banker or dealer into whose possession it passes, that it as nearly as possible returns to that state of bullion which the Chinaman prefers to minted coin. As it was, the only small change I could procure for a dollar was in fragments of silver: in the weighing out of which I was of course at the mercy of the shopman.

A chair having been with great difficulty procured for me, and another for my guide, we were about emerging from the bazaar, when I had the honour of meeting a mandarin and suite. My bearers had just time to squeeze into the entrance of a side-alley, when the cavalcade was down upon us. Funny looking soldiers, with spears and muskets indiscriminately, musicians and drummers or tom-tom beaters, and an amazing figure in red and gold apparel of a loose flapping cut, with a sword in his hand, mounted upon an inexcusable pony—a Chinese Rosinante. In the centre of this cortége the mandarin was borne along, a placid fat dignitary, in a richly embroidered purple velvet and golden dress, seated in a gaudy sedan.

It was a great relief to emerge from the crowded bazaar, pass through the gateway in the massive city wall, and proceed through comparatively airy lanes to one or two Chinese gentlemen's houses and gardens, which my guide most unceremoniously entered, marshalling me in without a word of introduction or apology, and making me feel rather ashamed of myself. These dwellings, as well as the joss-houses or temples, have been so often described, that I will not inflict them again on the reader. Not the slightest objection was raised by the priests to my exploring every part of the temples, the vergers showing the altars, the various images, the cloisters, and refectories,

with great alacrity, and extending their hands afterwards for a fee. The only undescribed fact connected with these worthies, which I was informed of, is, that they sell their finger-nails to any foreigner desirous of purchasing such curiosities. These nails are suffered to grow uncut, and attain a length of three or four inches, looking remarkably unlike finger-nails, and forming curiosities much coveted, said my guide, by foreign gentlemen and "cappens."² Among other religious edifices, I visited a Mahomedan temple, a singular jumble of Islamism and Buddhism. Extracts from the Koran wore an odd appearance emblazoned on Chinese architecture. There were no priests visible here; only children and begging old women.

Want of time prevented my visiting the camp or barracks of the Chinese soldiers, on the heights outside the eastern suburbs of the town. A large garden, attached to a temple on the Honan side, was the only other object I had time that day to inspect. The garden was principally stocked with orange-trees, also loquats and lychees, hundreds of which were on sale for the benefit of the good fathers, who are supported by the produce of the garden and the contributions of the piously disposed. On each side of the centre walk, beyond a little dirty pond, was a shed, with shelves, on which were ranged pots containing the ashes of the priests ("priests' bones," my guide irreverently called them); their bodies, after decease, undergoing incineration in an adjoining pit. Names, ages, and dates of decease are duly preserved, cut into slabs of stone on the concave face of a semi-circular screen of masonry in the garden. Before leaving the garden I was not a little surprised by the appearance of a veritable magpie, identical, as it seemed to me, with our British bird, that I had not seen for many years.

After guiding me safely to my quarters—for so labyrinthine is every part of Canton and Honan, that it would be hopeless to attempt to find one's way alone—my pilot left me and departed to his own home, which was, he told me, on the Canton side. The language he spoke is, as may be gathered from the specimens here given, not the ordinary "pigeon English" of Chinese servants: a style of gibberish which it is lamentable to think has become the ordinary channel of communication with all Chinamen. These sharp and intelligent people would soon learn to speak and understand better English than such sentences as, "You go top-side and catchee one piecee book"—"You tell those two piecee cooly go chowchow, and come back chopehop." (Go up-stairs and fetch a book—Tell those two coolies to go to their dinner, and return quickly). The good effects of the tuition afforded by schoolmasters and missionaries in China are much marred by the jargon used conventionally, with irrational adherence to defect in all ordinary transactions of business, by masters and mistresses in intercourse with their servants, and by commercial men with their native assistants.

About seven hours' run, in one of the American steamers before mentioned, carries the passenger from Canton to Macao. The mouth of the river is cleared in four hours, and the rest of the voyage is over an open sea, which, with a fresh southerly breeze, is rather rough for a flat-bottomed steamer : the islands to eastward, though numerous, being too remote to check the swell of the Chinese ocean. After running for about an hour along the bold rocky peninsula, at the point of which Macao is built, the steamer rounds in, and, entering a partially land-locked harbour between the town and some rocky islets to its south, anchors in smooth water. The town has a quaint picturesque look. Its old-fashioned houses extend to the water's edge. They are all of stone or brick, covering the face of the bold coast : the heights of which are crowned by castles, forts, batteries, and convents, from whose ancient walls the last rays of a setting sun were fading as we entered the harbour. The inhabitants are entirely Portuguese, Chinese, and a breed between the two. The jealousy of the Portuguese government effectually excludes foreigners from settling ; a miserable policy, by which trade is almost extinct, the revenue being derived chiefly from licensing of gambling-houses. In front of the house of the governor I saw a guard of soldiers. They were able-bodied, smart-looking young fellows, in neat blue uniforms, detailed from a regiment in the fort. These soldiers, and a few half-castes, looking like our office keranies in India, together with some strangely-dressed females, in appearance half aya, half sister of charity, were all that I saw of the Portuguese community. The non-military Portuguese looked jaded and lazy, almost every man with a cheroot in his mouth. The town, indeed, struck me as a very "Castle of Indolence."

A SOBER ROMANCE.

I. MAY MORNING IN LONDON.

A SLIGHT shower, fretful and quick as the anger of a coquette, had just washed the pavement till it had become shining as a huge looking-glass. The slates and tiles on millions of house-roofs were glistening like gold. In solitary puddles the London sparrows were flashing and prunning themselves as if they were dressing or a party, while in the quieter alleys the London boys were making little cocked-hat boats of paper, and launching them on the brimming gutters with all the hope and enjoyment of future Columbuses. Butcher-boys in blue, excited by the reappearance of sunshine, dashed down hot streets with their horned trays on their shoulders, as if their customers would die of starvation if the joint were three minutes late. The cabs, which the shower had sent flying to and fro, had passed away into the suburbs, or had relapsed to the quietude of their customary rank and stand. The cascades of ribbons in the milliners' windows, now attired for the day,

streamed with gay colours, brighter than ever in the restored sunbeams that shot in through cracks of the striped awnings. The crowd, gathering courage, began again to collect round the Italian boy with the performing monkey by the railings of St. Paul's. Again the costermonger steered his cart, full of flowering geraniums and pinks, hopefully between the Juggernaut Pickford vans and the ponderous West-end omnibuses. Above Bow church a great field of pure blue sky floated between the rolling icebergs of white cumulus clouds, like a huge imperial banner, for, the blue being in the minority, the white seemed sky and the blue cloud.

It had just struck twelve by St. Paul's—a fact which the clock of that church insisted on with sluggish emphasis—when the Colchester coach, on its way to Lad-lane, dashed through the eastward concourse of drays, cabs, vans, and carts, and drew up suddenly at the corner of St. Margaret-lane, which, as every citizen of London knows, is close to the old George the Second's church of St. Margaret-Moses.

The coachman drew up his four bays smartly and with an air, rejoiced to have got through his journey ; and the guard, to keep up the spirit of the thing, gave a jovial flourish on his horn, just to let people know the Colchester coach was no common coach, but a real high-flyer, and no two words about it.

The guard got down and tumbled a plain corded box out of the boot, and then a bundle tied up in a red and yellow handkerchief, and then, looking up at a pretty modest fresh-looking country girl, who sat contentedly next the coachman, holding a great tuft of May blossom, called out :

"Now then, Susan, my love, here you are ! Take care how you get down ; I'll catch you. Don't hurry, my girl, but look alive !"

"O dear ! guard, am I there, then, and is this Margaret-lane ?" said the prepossessing young woman, wishing the coachman good-by, and getting nimbly and modestly down, aided by the robust arms of the gallant guard.

"No. 16 it is, my dear. Good-by, Susan," cried the coachman ; "I'll tell mother to-morrow you got all safe. Jem 'll run with the box. Look alive, Jem ! Peacock wants her oats. You'll find us at the Swan-with-Two-Necks. Whist ! my beauties ! Hey there, Peacock, gently !" Crick, crack.

Poor Susan ! She gave a tearful stare at the receding coach, as if it were the last link that bound her to Colchester, and then turned and followed the guard up the dingy and narrow lane, where her new master resided. I refer to Mr. Josiah Dobb, grocer, wholesale and retail, and for thirty years churchwarden of the wealthy parish of St. Margaret-Moses.

"Put a good heart on it, Susan, gal," said the guard, as he shook hands with his charge. "It always seems strange a bit at first in a new place ; but Mr. Dobb is a kind old fellow as ever breathed, though they say he does hold on to the money. Good-by, Susan—God bless 'ee. Be a good girl—you'll soon shake down. If I

can bring up a parcel for you from Colchester now and then, why I will. Good-by, my dear."

II. THE ARRIVAL.

SUSAN SMITHERS was a shrewd ingenuous sturdy girl, with some honest sense and courage about her; but she felt rather shy and uncomfortable when she stood at the window of the large dingy wholesale and retail shop, and saw the crane, like a huge gibbet, impending over her head in a threatening and mysterious way. She could observe the bustle and stir inside the shop, where sprightly gentlemen, adorned with white neckcloths (for such was Mr. Dobbs's humour), weighed and packed pounds of tea, tins of cocoa, and parcels of coffee; where the sugar-chopper sounded unceasingly, and orders were shouted to the apprentices, as if the place were a ship, and a storm was looming in sight. She waited a moment or two, looking.

But common sense is a plant that grows just as well in the village as the town, and Susan, being a quick resolute prompt girl, was not going to waste her time standing outside; so she walked in, and seeing a young man with large whiskers and an imposing appearance stooping in front of the counter, and reading the direction on her box, she asked him if that was Mr. Dobbs's, and requested him to be kind enough to tell her the way down to Mr. Dobbs's kitchen. The imposing young man instantly turned pilot, and with a good-natured smile, returning that given him by Susan in mute reply, was entering into the full spirit of the occasion, when, from the left-hand side of the shop, at the further end, there stepped down from a high enclosed desk, that looked partly like a madman's cell, and still more like a pulpit, a tall thin old gentleman, who wore a pigtail (my story dates some twenty years back), a blue coat with bright brass buttons, a yellow marsala waistcoat with a scarlet one underneath (only the edge showing), and a frilled shirt-front, and nankeen trousers. He was the very pink of neatness and precision, was this old gentleman, and his neatness and trimness made him seem quite alert and young. His face was of a pale nankeen colour, like the part of his dress already glanced at, but then it was clear in tone, and about the cheeks healthy blood showed through it. This pleasant old gentleman held a pen in one hand, and jostled his great bunch of large gold watch-seals with the other, as he came up to Susan's pilot.

"Mr. Tompkins," he said, "mind that that tea goes off to Edwards's people this evening. They have written again about it. But who is this? Are you the new servant?"

Susan dropped a pretty curtsey, and said, mildly but firmly, that she believed she was.

The old gentleman gave her a long keen look from under his thick grey eyebrows: a parental custom-house officer's sort of look: and said, "Be a good girl—it's not a heavy place. Mr. Tompkins, take down—What's your name, my dear, eh?"

"Susan Smithers, if you please, sir." (A second curtsey.)

"And I do please. Take down Susan, Mr. Tompkins, to Mrs. Thompson, and tell her to make her comfortable."

"What a nice old gentleman!" said Susan, as she followed her nimble and good-natured pilot down the dark back stairs.

"Yes, he is a good old party. That's our governor."

"O dear me! What is that Mr. Dobbs? Well, he has a pleasant way with him."

"Yes, that's the governor, no mistake about it."

Susan was very warmly received by her old widow aunt, Mr. Dobbs's housekeeper for thirty years. The worthy woman was very busy preparing dinner, and was up to her eyes in potatoes, which she peeled and tossed into a pan of water as quickly as though she were doing it for a wager. In a very few minutes, Susan, like a good smart willing girl as she was, had taken off her bonnet, and washed her face and hands, put on a clean apron, and was ready to chop parsley and finish the potatoes.

"Susan's a good sort," thought the old lady to herself. "She'll do. She'll be as good as gold to me. And how neat and handy she is, and a tidy looking girl too!"

Together over the potatoes, which one by one splashed into the great yellow pan, the old aunt and her niece chatted over Colchester friends.

"And how is Jane Turner? And is Miss Charlotte married yet? How's brother's rheumatism?" and so on. To all of which queries Susan answered sensibly and sharply. All of a sudden she darted at her bundle that had been placed on a chair near the window.

"O, dear aunt, what a stupid forgetful thing I've been all this time, to forget I brought up some clover turfs for the lark you're so fond of."

"O, how very kind, Susan, to think of poor Dicky! And they *are* nice and fresh. O, they do remind one of the country, they do."

"Let me sprinkle them, aunt, with some water, and give Dicky one now."

"Do, my dear, while I get the meat down, for master always dines at five, and I haven't too much time, Susy."

"Where is Dicky, aunt?"

"Why there, dear, by the back door. I put him there to let him have as much air as possible."

Susan tripped to the back door, and there, in a light green cage, found the lark: no longer bright and quick as when sent from Colchester, but dingy, ruffled, and almost tailless, and with eyes that had now become knowing, yet spiritless. It was hopping on a dusty little door-mat bit of withered turf, and was thrusting its little graceful brown head, feverishly and restlessly, like Sterne's starling, through the sooty wires of its prison.

A sudden sense of the confinement and sordidness of London city life gloomed down for

a moment over the mind of the country girl, still untamed by cellar-kitchens, late hours, over-work, and want of exercise. But she cast it aside in a moment, as she would have done an evil thought, and laughed to kill any care or sorrow that hovered near.

Susan's aunt, worthy old Mrs. Thompson, turned to look at her niece, resting for a moment on the dresser the neat fillet of veal that she was about to thrust into a cradle spit.

"That's a good-hearted girl, I'm sure," she thought to herself. "She'll be a comfort to me as I go down the hill. I always found as young people as loves the poor dumb creatures turn out well, and wicy-wersy."

In the mean time, Susan was out there in the little well shaft of an area, busily arranging the turf in the cage, which, sprinkled under the pump, now lifted its green blades and purple tufts of flowers that smelt of honey, and seemed to bring a certain portion of sunshine with them into that extremely "shady" place. The bird, bustling about in his little meadow, had already gathered new life from that pleasant reminiscence of freedom and the country. First, he merely darted to and fro, quick as a rat, and thrust his head in and out of the bars, like the immortal starling aforesaid; but presently darting to the roof, as if with the fullest intention of beating out its brains, the poor little exile from the blue air and white wandering clouds, failing in that attempt, poured forth in grateful gladness a little hurricane of innocent and tender music.

"Dicky is so pleased," said Susan, tripping back and kissing her aunt on the back of her neck, as she stooped over the encaged veal. "And now to tell me what sort of an old gentleman master is. Shall I be servant enough? It is such a grand house, aunty."

Mrs. Thompson sat down with the fillet of veal reposing on her lap as if it were a child, and discoursed:

"He is a very kind, upright gentleman, is Mr. Dobbs, Susan, and it is a very respectable, comfortable place for them as choose to make it so. And the young men in the shop, especially Mr. Tompkins the foreman, are most well-behaved. A little noisy and mischievous the younger ones, but such is life. It's a place, Susan, to be proud of, as I have found these thirty year as I've lived in the parish of St. Margaret-Moses."

The veal began to turn a most delicious light-brown, and to weep tears of fat over its own inevitable fate. At sight of these savoury symptoms, Mrs. Thompson took down from a nail near the clock, an old black bonnet with strings never meant to tie. "I must just run over to Mrs. Peacock's for a moment and get some parsley for garnish; watch the meat, there's a dear, till I return. I want to ask her how her husband is, for he's bad with the rheumatic fever, poor dear soul. I shan't be long. I shall be back by four. Master always comes down at half-past four to wash his hands for dinner, and he's as regular as clockwork. Then he goes out to take a quiet turn in Drapers'

Gardens or Old Jewry, to give him an appetite, and just as the clock strikes five you'll hear him knock. Good-by, dear; mind the basting, for that's a perfect pictur that fillet of veal is, though I say it as shouldn't say it. It does look rather dark, but I won't take my umbrella, because the shop is only just over the corner of our lane. Bless me, how that dear bird do sing! It's very nice, but it don't go through your head like a canary do."

With such good-natured chatter the faithful old automaton, ignorant of all country pleasures, and heedless of the joys of liberty, toddled upstairs on her kind errand. The front door slammed behind her.

III. THE AVATAR.

Is there in all the world any object so pleasant to the eye or to the mind (to see, that is, or to contemplate) as a fresh pure girl absorbed in a day-dream, lost in rosy clouds of the illimitable future, aping the toiling thinker, yet merely playing with the kaleidoscope of the young imagination?

How could I hope to sketch those simple day-dreams of Susan's? How could I convey to the minds of others her glimpses of thatched roofs overrun with roses; of kind old faces watching for the postman; of green lanes and tranquil churches, with the yew, which no centuries of sunshine can enliven, looking in wistfully at the windows; the murkier but still luminous scenes from London streets, across which passed processions of cheerful fresh-coloured young men adorned with white neckcloths, headed by smiling Mr. Tompkins? All these motley visions a cuckoo-clock broke up by its warning clamour.

Susan looked up as guiltily at the niddly-noddly bird bowing furiously from the clock, as if a policeman had suddenly entered and accused her of some theft. IT WAS STRIKING FOUR O'CLOCK, and Aunt Thompson would be back directly. Fortunately for Susan (everything seemed to go well on this lucky day); the joint had not burnt; it had gone twirling steadily and methodically on, resigned to its fate, and quite at home by this time with misfortune; it was browning and roasting equably and well over the bright clean hearth, basted with its own juice, a patient victim to the fierce white heat of a rejoicing and victorious fire. If there were a brownie who watched over the kitchen of No. 16, St. Margaret-lane, that brownie had been there during Susan's day-dream, attending to the browning of that fillet of veal.

The domestic fairies had been as busy as crickets, stirring round the potatoes, and blowing out chance angry puffs of gas which the evil principles sent to scorch the untended fillet.

Ten minutes past four, and Mrs. Thompson not back! No wonder; for look, a quick fretful shower was speckling against the windows. The good old lady had been caught, no doubt, by the rain, and kept under shelter.

Now, it would never do, Susan thought, for aunt to come back and find her an idle good-for-nothing thing, sitting staring at the fire; so she darted up, and, uncording her box, got out some patchwork that she was finishing for home, and, taking it to the window, from whence she could see the fire, and where the plate-warmer did not interrupt her view, she sat down on a chair and bent herself diligently at her work.

There was no sound but the click and jolt of the spit, the fall of an occasional coal against the edge of the dripping-pan, and now and then a little voice-performance from the lark in the outer area.

On the whitewashed wall, close to the window, and a little to the left hand of where Susan sat merrily at work, there hung a little square looking-glass. All at once, as Susan's eyes glanced upwards from her work (for her chair was turned round almost facing the window), she saw upon its surface the reflexion of the clock-face, the hands of which pointed to half-past four.

"Why, good gracious, what is aunt doing?" thought Susan. "We dine at five, and at half-past four master comes down to wash his hands before he goes his walk. O dear, O dear, the veal will be spoiled! Where is aunt?"

Then, with one look at the veal, which was bearing its fiery martyrdom with good-natured equanimity, she resumed her work again with somewhat restless and troubled haste. When, five minutes later, her eyes rose once more to the looking-glass (not from vanity, but by mere accident), she almost screamed, for she saw in it the reflexion of a tall neatly-dressed old gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons, who stood at the foot of the stairs and just within the shadow of the doorway, his eyes bent upon her.

Now, Mr. Dobbs did not turn off to the left and go into the scullery to wash his hands at the tap, as he might have been expected to do, but he came slowly up to the window without speaking.

Susan's heart beat nineteen to the dozen. Was he going to scold her aunt for being out at such a critical time? No; he did not speak, but walked to the fire, looked at the veal, hemmed twice, coughed, and then returned to Susan's chair. The second time, he stooped, and lifted her hand with a grave politeness.

"Susan," he said, "will you accept me as a husband? There, don't flurry yourself! I will come down again in ten minutes and hear your answer. Good-by till then." And up-stairs he went.

While Susan still sat there, red as a damask rose, trembling, confused, astonished, frightened, the front door creaked, and down came Mrs. Thompson, all in a flurry.

"O, Susan! I've been kept by a poor creature as I saw fall in a fit just by St. Margaret-Moses. I and Mrs. Jones got him to the door of the milkman's at the corner, and undid his shirt-collar and waistcoat to give him

air, and what should we find under his waist-coat but a large placard, on which was written, 'Don't bleed me; give me brandy-and-water,' which we did, and just as he had taken it up came a policeman, and said he was a rogue, and had soap in his mouth to make it look like foam; and just then the rascal gets up, leaps over a truck, and runs off, and Mrs. Jones—"

But Susan, unable to bear the delay any longer, burst out with her story: to which her aunt listened with staring eyes, uplifted hands, and open mouth.

"It was Mr. Tompkins, depend upon it, my dear."

"No, aunt, it was master—it was indeed. I knew him, because he spoke to me in the shop when I came in. O, dear aunt, he'll be down directly! What shall I do?"

"Do, dear? Do whatever your own heart tells you to do. Think of your father and mother, and what you gain and what you sacrifice. O dear me, I hope master is not going mad. I'll leave you, dear, and shut myself in the area out of hearing, and you must call me when he's gone. Lawks, I do think I hear him coming. Mind you say yes or no, or he'll be angry."

Solomon himself could not have given wiser counsel. The good old body scuttled off to a retired corner of the coal-hole, and Susan, blushing and tremulous, settled again, or pretended to settle, to her work.

In that swift moment what thousands of kind, and generous, and self-denying thoughts shot like express trains through Susan's little head! Poor father, mother getting old, William Brown her old sweetheart that wild sailor—who had ceased to write to her, and who was now lying at Quebec, too late repentant, crippled and penniless, sick, and perhaps dying. With Mr. Dobbs's fortune, what fairy dreams of good she might realise.

A voice she knew, from behind her chair, said:

"Susan, will you have me for a husband?"

She hardly knew how to answer, but, dropping her patchwork, she answered naïvely, in a low but firm voice:

"Yes, sir, if you please."

Then there came a calm kiss upon her forehead, and a hand clasped hers.

"You shall never repent that word, Susan," said Mr. Dobbs. "I will be good and true. You must do no more work in this place; remember, you are to be my wife. Good-by, dearest."

When Susan dared to look round, he was gone. But it was no dream, for there was the May-bough she had brought from Colchester blooming in the great blue jug over the mantelpiece.

Susan ran and dragged Aunt Thompson out of the coal-cellars, and told her all: not boastingly, nor pertly, nor vainly, but with quiet modest satisfaction; for, after all, she well knew her heart would never break forth into such flower as it had once done, and the good

fortune was still too recent and too overwhelming.

How can so feeble a narrator as I, pretend to describe the way in which Aunt Thompson received the news; how she first turned tricolor with surprise, then purple with delight, then hysterical with joy; how she sat down and rocked in her chair, and then laughed and then cried! As I am not writing fiction, why should I dilate on these obvious things?

The affair was kept secret for a week by Mr. Dobbs's wish and Aunt Thompson's advice: the only bad result of which secrecy was, that it destroyed the happiness of two aspiring men—Mr. Tompkins, and the gay rattling honest guard of the Colchester coach: both of whom proposed to Susan within the week, and both of whom were rejected.

IV. THE MARRIAGE.

NEVER had the important beadle of the important parish of St. Margaret-Moses seen such a marriage. There were ninety-four charity boys and girls, with white satin favours on their left arms. There was bell-ringing, almost Bedlamic in its persistent and rejoicing jangle. There was a parish dinner, at which Mr. Tompkins mournfully presided, looking down between an avenue of twelve white ties. The chimney of No. 16 for a whole week smoked, and then for two whole days the fire-engines could not be kept from the house; and as for the ramonneur-men, their brushes waved in St. Margaret-lane as Birnam Wood when it came marching down on the doomed castle of Macbeth. No Pickford van came to Margaret-lane but the drivers were feasted on good beef and ale, so lavishly did the bridegroom's hospitality inundate and flood all that came near that locality; at one time, indeed, it was all Mr. Tompkins could do to prevent the twelve frantic young men in white ties from rushing into Cheapside, and offering jugs of beer to passing hackney-coachmen.

Mr. Dobbs had chosen a wife late in life; he had chosen a young wife from a dangerous and foolish impulse, and dared the radical publican at the THREE MALT SHOVELS in Seething-lane; but the radical publican was wrong, as parish and other politicians have indeed been known to be more than once. Mr. Dobbs had chosen late and chosen hastily, but he had chosen with the swift unerring instinct of a shrewd old brain and an old but still unchilled heart. He had dived into the great shoal-begirt sea of matrimony, and found a pearl of pearls.

He affected no hurricane of passion, no sighs—no ceaseless vows and brittle protestations—he loved calmly, respectfully, almost paternally; but he loved (though he was a grocer) as faithfully as your finest impossible lover in fiction. He did not flatter Susan, or weary her with servile adoration, but he showed her by a thousand ceaseless quiet attentions how much he loved her. When she told him of Mr. Tomp-

kins's proposal, and thought it would be better he left (though she thought him a kind-hearted, industrious fellow), Mr. Dobbs would not hear of such a thing.

"No, Susan," he said; "there's no jealousy, not a grain, in me. I love you too well. And even if you never learned to love me, I know very well that you would love no other man, my darling?"

A night or two after the wedding, when Susan and Aunt Thompson were chatting alone on a seat in pleasant Drapers' Gardens, Aunt Thompson, foolishly enough, began to cry as if her heart was going to break.

"Why, dear aunty, aunty, what is the matter?" said Susan, fondling and kissing her good old cheek.

"I'm afraid, dear—I've been thinking—I'm afraid that now you are married, and are rich and rolling in money, the beauty and wonder of all St. Margaret-Moses—which you was the very last Sunday as ever was—you'll be getting ashamed of poor old aunt, and be sending me off, for fear your new friends should think me ignorant, and not fit for parlour visitors, and out of place, and—oh!" (Here Niobe became a mere drinking fountain to the Mississippi of the good old creature's grief.)

How tenderly and softly Susan comforted Aunt Thompson, and kissed her, and pulled off her gloves, and patted her hands, and hugged her waist, and assured her that if the Bank of England got so full with dear Mr. Dobbs's money that they actually refused to take in any more of it for fear of a financial apoplexy, still even in that contingency she (Susan) would love and cherish her old aunt, who had been the cause of all her good fortune, and had enabled her to help poor William, and perhaps save his life!

V. LAST SCENE OF ALL.

In the second year of Susan's marriage she gave birth to a son, much to the delight of the whole parish of St. Margaret-Moses, and to the special joy of Aunt Thompson and her crony Mrs. Jones, now the pew-opener. Nine years after the marriage, old Aunt Thompson died, and eleven years after the marriage, Mr. Dobbs died.

They were both buried in the black quiet little churchyard of St. Margaret-Moses. No pleasant trees cast wavering shadows upon their tombstones, but mignonette bloomed sweet close at hand, and sunshine came and glanced across the sooty boughs of the solitary plane-tree, and little melancholy precocious sparrows chirped their embryo music, and little rosy faces looked at the graves from between the rusty rails, and little voices prattled of "dood Mr. Dobbs," and of "dood Mrs. Thompson." And those words were better than sham poems and the lying flowers that often fall on grander coffins.

One afternoon, two years later, Mr. Tompkins, now rather corpulent and slightly bald, blurted out a proposal of marriage to the rich and still

pretty widow of the millionaire of Margaret-lane.

"No, Mr. Tompkins," said Susan, "I value you for your probity and your industry, and still more for your fidelity and attachment to my dear husband. Nor am I indifferent to this last stronger proof of your regard to myself personally; but I shall never marry again. I shall devote the rest of my life to directing the education of my dear boy. Hereafter I shall perhaps find an opportunity of showing how much I value your services. For the present, good-by. Forget what you have just said to me, and let it be as if it had never been said."

Mr. Tompkins rose, and was struggling with the back of his chair in oratorical agony, when the door burst open, and in rushed Master Harry Dobbs, who had been helping the servant to pack his trunk for Eton.

"Ma," he said, "how many collars am I to take? There are only three dozen here."

"My dear Harry, Mr. Tompkins is talking business. I'll be with you directly."

One bright afternoon, in the June of the same year, that eminent law lord, Lord Cante-lupe, whose eldest son was married the other day to the second daughter of the Marquis de Champignon, reined up the two bays that drew his barouche, at the door of Mrs. Dobbs, 16, St. Margaret-lane.

The bell was rung. Mrs. Dobbs was at home. Now, Lord Cante-lupe had been an old friend of Mr. Dobbs, and was surprised to find the hall—or rather dim passage, for it was no more—lumbered with boxes, and rolls of carpet, and cases of pictures. These he stopped to survey in an alarmed manner through a gold-framed double eye-glass.

"Egad!" he said to himself, "I was only just in time to snap the widow. My usual luck. Now for it."

In twenty minutes more, the accomplished and gifted orator had, with all an old wary man of the world's sagacity and blandness, laid down an impromptu carpet of verbal rose-leaves, upon which he had figuratively thrown himself, and prostrated himself, his oratory, his ermine, and his house in Park-row, at the feet of the pretty widow.

An interval of silence ensued, as when one goes down in a diving-bell. Then, came a violent pricking in the legal ears of the accomplished orator. These remarkable and astounding words struck his noble tympanum:

"My lord, you were such a kind friend to my dear husband, and have been so kind to me since his death, that it gives me pain to refuse the

honour so generously proffered me, but I shall never marry again. I shall devote the rest of my life to the education of my boy Harry. I should not wish the world to impute mercenary motives to any man who took me for his wife. I leave this house to-morrow. I have given half the business to my excellent foreman, and have taken a house at Slough, to be near my boy's school."

"Egad," said Lord Cante-lupe, as he got into his carriage, and squeezed together (in a half petulant, half melancholy way) the two portions of his eye-glass: "no verdict in the world ever knocked me over half as much. Yet, by George, I don't know now that I won't have another try. What could she mean about mercenary?"

The noble and learned lord has not yet won Mrs. Dobbs, Harry is a capital fellow, and the business at No. 16, Margaret-lane, flourishes bravely under the auspices of Tompkins.

My story has, I know, been absurdly simple. No intrusive husband toppled down a well, no bigamy nor trigamy, no poisoned sandwich. It has only been a plain unadorned narrative of self-denial, and of a heart that bloomed

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